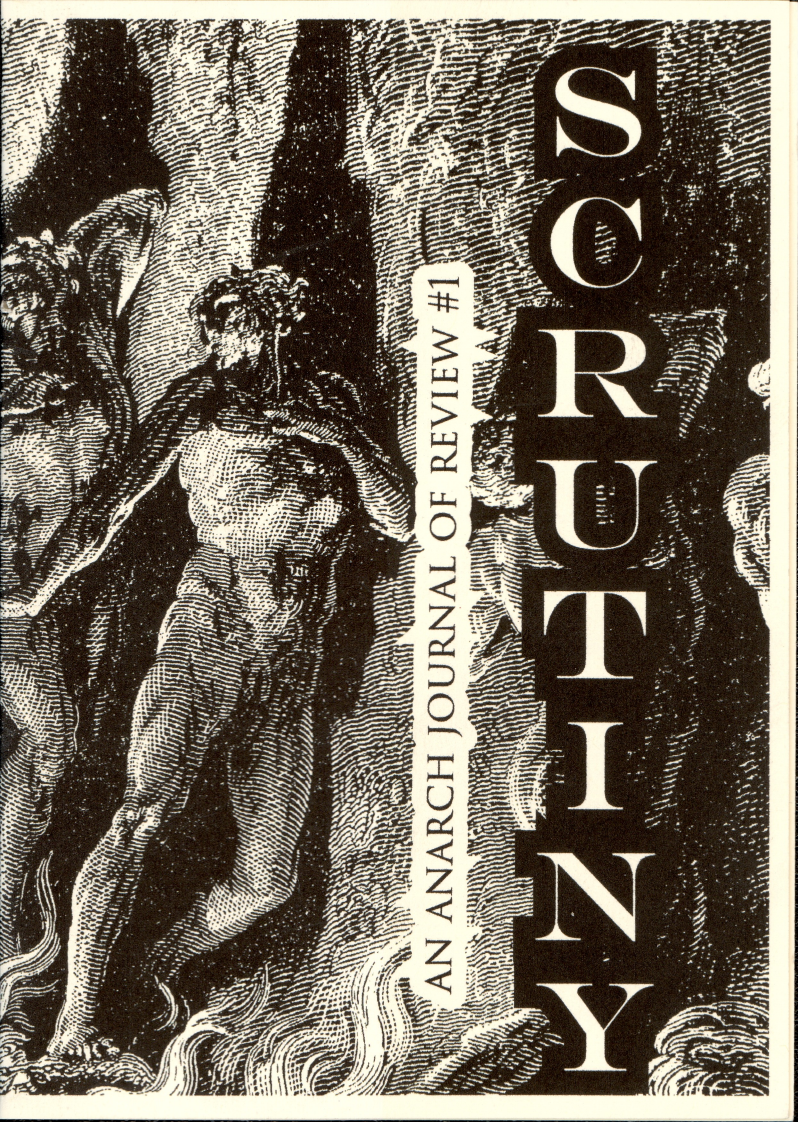


SCRUTINY

AN ANARCH JOURNAL OF REVIEW #1

Scrutiny #1
(an anarch journal of review)

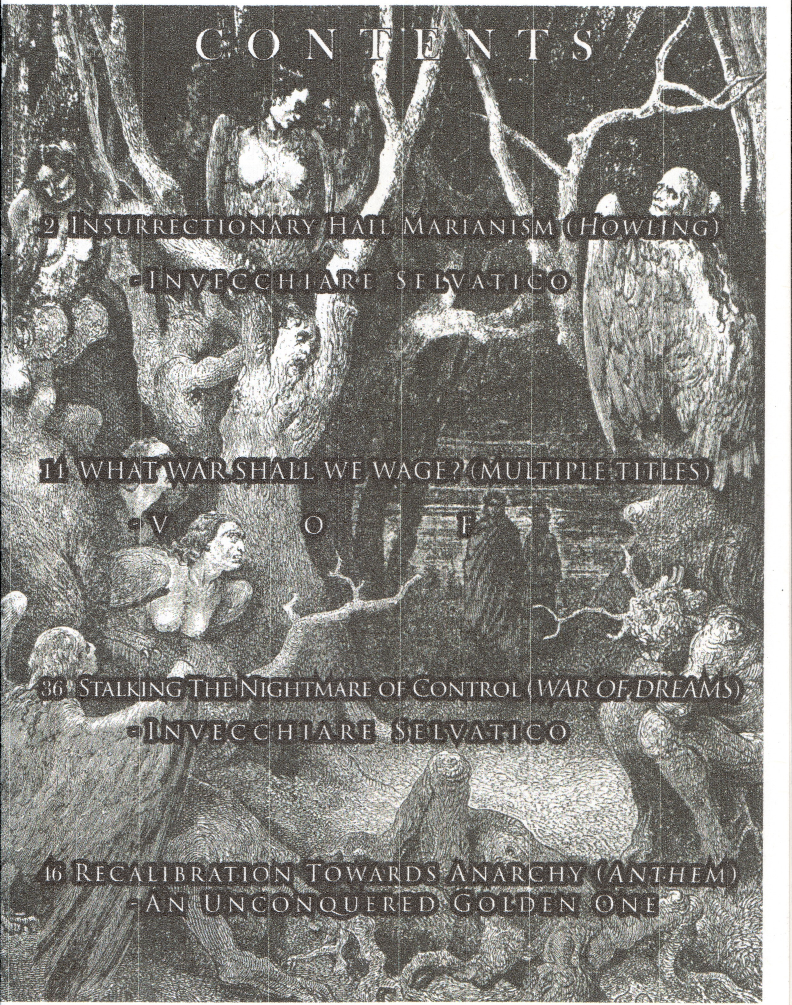
Scrutiny is sorely needed, everywhere. That has been our assessment. If we are to move beyond the banal and redundant self-referential mediocrity of this current reality, we need to be far more relationally critical and honest, not only of the horrifying world at large, the varied environments we are part of, and our own thoughts and actions, but most forcefully with the withering anarchist space we still dwell within (somewhat reluctantly and certainly marginally at this point, we suppose). If we are to remain vital as anarchists, we need to stop mincing words, making people feel comfortable, going through predictable motions, signaling virtues, poorly mimicking intelligence, propping up emptiness, propagandizing deadness, and providing material, actions, and ideas that derive from, feed into, and are absorbed by power. Perhaps we are still too stubborn to give up on anarchists, this may be our eventual downfall, but the beautiful idea is too potent and expansive to abandon, especially in this time of pervasive meaninglessness, and perhaps some of those still seduced by anarchy can rise to the worthwhile challenges it requires and offers.

In this light, reviews can be a useful way to explore the intersections and overlapping of relevant ideas and projects, to asses the relative health of anarchist discourse and action, and to cut out the diseased (or worse, benign) flesh, at least from our lives. Reviews can spark important discussions, point to potential problems, highlight vibrant and useful new directions, or reveal new accomplices. They can also, thankfully, draw critical and essential lines.

The unfortunate part of all this has been the almost complete vanishing of the printed journal as a means of open critique and discussion, along with the absolute hegemony of the virtual. It seems pointless and sad to critically interact with projects, pick them apart, try to understand them, and then articulate our thoughts about them, just to post our endeavors on some website for the thick-skulled thumb-driven hot-takers to respond with "tldr", or worse, attempt to dishonestly "engage" with reviews from either ideological trenches, ignorance, or performative gesturing. Despite its own inherent limitations and potential pitfalls and its more pale form of communication than direct face-to-face dialogue, we feel that the printed page has infinitely more value than the dismal dead screen. The printed word gives time and space to contemplate and digest rather than react with superficial politicized spasms. For this reason, we have initiated the project we call Scrutiny (an anarch journal of reviews).

Submissions of reviews and responses are welcome, but not always appreciated or published. With Open Eyes and Sharpened Pencils,

-Scrutiny



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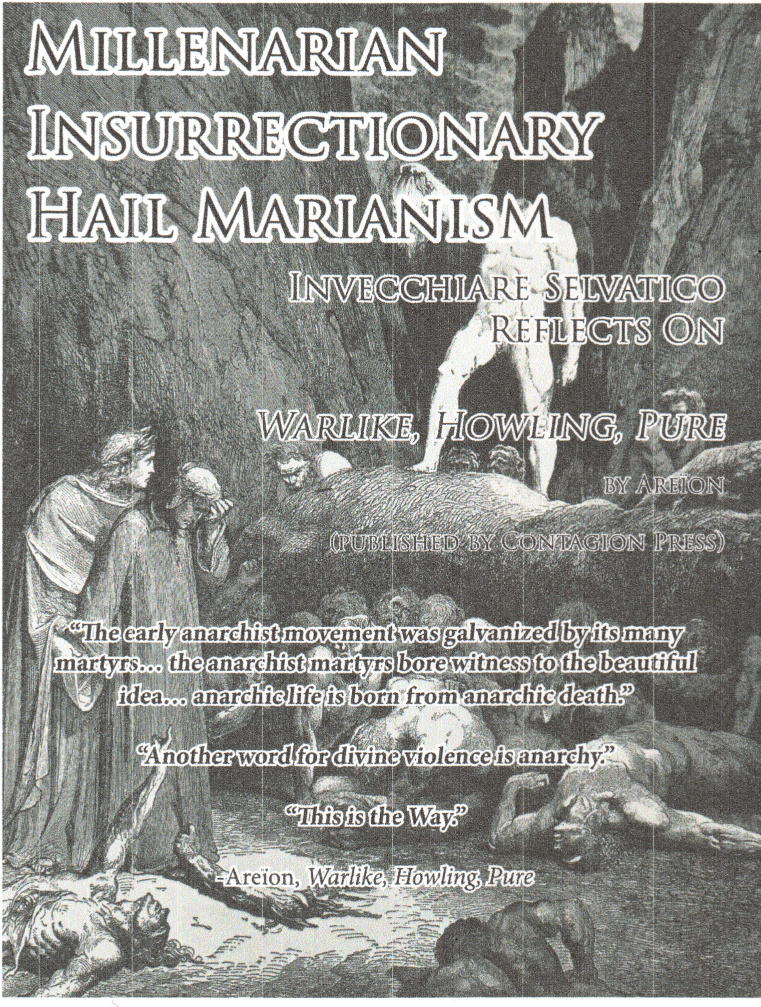


MILLENARIAN INSURRECTIONARY HAIL MARIANISM

INVECCHIARE SELVATICO REFLECTS ON

WARLIKE, HOWLING, PURE

BY AREÏON

(PUBLISHED BY CONTAGION PRESS)

"The early anarchist movement was galvanized by its many martyrs… the anarchist martyrs bore witness to the beautiful idea… anarchic life is born from anarchic death."

"Another word for divine violence is anarchy."

"This is the Way."

-Areïon, *Warlike, Howling, Pure*

The clock is winding down and there seems to be no path to "victory", no chance of "winning" (concepts only relevant for those stuck playing Their games). But no, wait… Could it be? Religiosity, self-sacrificial martyrdom, and agenda-infused opportunistic historical re-readings (what the author would likely dismiss as historical revisionism)… that'll get us to freedom, to anarchy! Awe, well, um, ok? *Warlike, Howling, Pure* feels like an act of desperation, a last-ditch effort at some sort of ending-times anarchist final triumph or last stand, one that hopefully will not pull other lost souls into its hallowed and insurrecto-thiestic void.

But, before we get ahead of ourselves, let's take a step back and quickly trace the general path to this anarcho-rapture. First, many action-addicted and street-performing anarchists reconstituted their overinflated revolutionary goals as insurrectionary (mostly a bad take on an earlier and more interesting Italian version), but most still believed in the inherently authoritarian project of Revolution and of transforming society to their particular idea of a "better world". Then, some of the more sophisticated of the lot payed lip-service to criticisms by merely naming them and rebranding to "combative anarchy" and duped a new generation of wide-eyed pseudo-rebels and glorified activists to take to the streets for the "good fight" (a more edgy and militant front of the typical array of symptomatic left-oriented causes). And now, as a bleak darkness envelops, millennial-driven millenarian anarchism and the embracing of a religious warrior epic battle for anti-racist and anti-fascist glory is the latest vision in the desert of insurrectionary anarchism. Little has changed, except for the depth of depression, degree of delusion, level of exaggeration and bloated rhetoric, and grandeur in scope. Like a divine message from the gods, *Warlike, Howling, Pure* opens up this new millenarian "cyclical phase", which I would argue is actually sick-lical, monotonously repetitive, and spiraling downward. Add to this body of work a disjointed, convoluted, and religiously-infused Forward by communist-flavored "insurrectionary" (academic) author Idris Robinson, someone who has written in previous work that they are always in "pain" except (supposedly) when they are engaged in attack and who has continually worshiped the idea of martyrdom. Now Idris's "pain" is extended to everyone and everywhere with statements like "(Areïon)… demonstrates, incontrovertibly, that our everyday reality, is in fact, hell, in the most literal and concrete sense" and "what you are about to read is nothing short of a life or death struggle, over what is to live and what is to die". Robinson goes on to further describe the righteous battle of good and evil, heaven and hell by offering what thirteenth-century mystic, Aziz O-Din Nasafi, supposedly "teaches us", which when read through contemporary eyes follows a very similar march that Marx offers in which "all people must first enter hell to reach heaven". Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!

In a moralistic millenarian-Marxism infused with hyper-religiosity and foaming-at-the-mouth fervor, Idris proclaims from the mount: "The directive is then as clear as ever: either burrow further into the deep recesses of yourself or the moment has arrived for the proletarians to finally storm heaven" and "as religious insight has repeatedly confirmed, hell is nothing other than individual torment without collective deliverance" and "whenever and wherever the exploited and the oppressed transform themselves into insurgents, rebels, and combatants, the gates are crashed, the oath is consummated, and all this is marked by the anointing of the messiah as the collective subject" and "the messianic is therefore a volatile tension constantly traversing the souls of the chosen".

Then consider, for instance, Robinson's glowing appreciation for and reprinting of Father George Willie Hurley's adaption of the Ten Commandments with a list of "Thou shalls and shalls nots…" which includes "Thou shall believe that the Ethiopians and all nations will rule the world in righteousness…", and it is clear that Idris has a disturbing religious, communist, and insurrecto-messianic agenda. Combining Robinson's forward with Areïon's four essays which make up this short book, what you have is a recipe for something, in my mind, that is uninteresting and not very anarchist. To be fair, Idris is far more troubled and troubling than Areïon, but still, *Warlike, Howling, Pure* appears to be a new depth of delusion from this particular camp, and comes regrettably from the otherwise provocative Contagion Press.

Obviously, there is an almost absolute and pervasive spiritual emptiness all around. Of course, this has been a deepening general crisis for over a century now (to some extent for multiple millennia), only magnified by science, rationality, politics, and most exponentially by technology, especially the virtual realm. But filling this hole with a millenarian religiosity of perpetual apostolic attack (mostly in selfaggrandizing rhetorical fronting) and endless rationales for martyrdom is just plain absurd. If this were a random wing-nut, or even a cute little cult, I could find some amusement in it all. I will admit that I appreciated early ITS and even found later off-the-deep-end and whacky incarnations (whether they actually existed or not) interesting on some perverse level. Hell, Charlie Manson gave me some chuckles from time to time and I must confess to a little crush on the bad-ass Sheela of Rajneeshpuram. The author of this book, however, is not some detached actor, but a long-term anarchist who is part of a developing sphere of theory and practice, which, for me, feels significantly different.

A Holy War, as detailed in the book or of any variety, is about as far from my reality as I can imagine. I am against civilization, not the projection and persecution of ideologically un-pure and politicized infidels within it. My spirituality feels unique and grounded in direct organic relations, not myopic thrusts of mythological chest-pumping warrior jiz. My shared spirituality feels intimate and penetrating, not rhetorical and opportunistic. My spirituality is the daily living of getting dirty. It is not removed, epically-driven, and only metaphorically earthen. In my life, balancing belief, uncertainty, and enchantment is essential in the way I relate to spirituality and is fundamentally at odds with any sort of Holy War.

Whether intended this way or not, *Warlike, Howling, Pure* reads like the beginnings of an anarchist holy scripture, despite any caveats or disclaimers. But anarchy is neither pious nor evangelical. It is heretical and dispersed. To try to convince others is pathetic enough, but to suck people's lives into a personal (or group) vision that is nothing more than another religious meat-grinding cause is atrocious. Why would we spend the precious little time we have being alive wasted on the delusions of someone's (or some group's) desperate cause rather than figuring out or remembering how to live freely?

Instead, I choose to carve out as much autonomy as I can outside, on the edges, and even within this messed up reality, on my own terms, with the people I love, anarchically not religiously. I'll defend myself and our people and place on this earth to my last drop of blood, but I will never be a part of any righteous epic battle over good and evil, however its rationalized. Being willing to fight for our lives is much different than feeling an obligation to some larger struggle of cleansing the unrepentant in fire and blood.

It must be said, Areïon brings many important and interesting micro-histories to the table, and in a different context I would appreciate them, but they tend to be used as historical fodder in the ultimate agenda of supporting their particular vision of insurrectionary anarchism. From various rebellious sects in ancient China to Spartacus in the Roman Empire to the Iron Column of The Spanish Civil War to a very opportunistic and thin painting of the Diocesan spirit (and animism for that matter), Areïon appears to have a clear goal in telling these stories. This, of course, is always the case to some degree, we all do it, but I find their telling particularly manipulative, exaggerated, and predictable, like all would-be revolutionaries. For instance, just one of many over-stated claims is that the White Lotus Society "attempted to abolish distinctions between genders, and practiced mutual aid", yet the only evidence of this in the book is the fact that, according to the sourced Elizabeth J. Perry's "Worshipers and Warriors" in some factions "women were active fighters and group leaders" and "there is some evidence of cooperative economic activities… to aid the poorest participants in the struggles," So, if that's all it takes, I guess we are there?

Even when Areïon attempts to move on from the heavily-handed propagandizing of their reading of certain more distant histories and comes closer to the American experience and present times, they fall into an all-too-politicized and sadly too-familiar over-simplistic axis of diametrics: "Whiteness" and "antiblackness" vs freedom and liberation. As if that is the only choice, the only way to view things, the only way to be situated, the only tensions, the only histories, the only way to respond, the dominant description of our time. And often when they do this, they intensely project a solidified rationale and reasoning on the players of both sides of this forced and fabricated equation. If only it were all so simple. If only there were a good and bad, right and wrong, victim and oppressor, then Areïon's grossly simplistic "Antiracist Holy War" and anarchist millenarian jihad might warrant a second look. But we all know, whether we admit to it or allow it to muddy lame politics or derail thesis projects, that this type of opportunistic over-simplicity only feeds the beast and becomes the negative of what we are against, not to mention the argumentation of "anti-Whiteness" is parallel (with basically the same critique, metrics, and language) to most leftists these days on the subject of race. It all begins to sound too much like NPR with the volume turned up real loud. Too limited a perspective for anarchists, too trapped, too controlled.

It really starts getting creepy, however, when the author begins writing about taking "loyalty oaths" and "declaring allegiance to all of those excluded" and marginalized by their declared (and offered by academia and activists) enemy in society: "Whiteness". Deep bonds of trust between our kin (of all sorts and combinations) is essential, but their's is an overlaid and projected loyalty that rises up to ideology, politics, religion, warfare, and even society in strange ways, not the creative decentralized lives entwined together in the mud and seed that I sink deeper into. Ours is familiar and tribal and anarchistic, not some vague movement of the oppressed holding everyone accountable for previous sins carried down from generation to generation. Sound familiar? Areïon's rhetoric and reasonings reflect the vanguardist populism draped in religiosity, as well as the religious fundamentalism that has stained history with the blood of the unbelievers.

Then enters the fire and brimstone, divine vengeance, martyrdom and personal sacrificial duties, and literal sacrifices to gods. And, just like God said to Noah, "Won't be water, be fire next time!" Areïon assures us without missing a beat of the war-drum that "The fire is here and there is no escaping it" and that "hopefully" the new resurgence in "Spiritualism… will finally spill the blood that the vengeful dead demand. If not, the Furies will hound this guilty land with madness until its crimes are purged." Not what I am looking for when I engage in a spiritual realm. I look to connect, not project.

Again, if this were some rando on the street corner with snot in their beard holding an upside-down and (perhaps) misspelled placard reading: "God's Cumming Again!", I might buy them a cup of coffee and chat a bit for shits and giggles, maybe. Or, I would attempt to avoid the hell out of them. In this case, however, I would say Areïon appears (in the book) to be playing on the fads, trends, depressions, misconceptions, distorted emotions, and the bad takes of so many pseudo-anarchists playing games of performance and desperation, in their evangelical attempt to brand their "Antiracist Holy War" and "divine violence" as "anarchy". It is not. Their explorations in anarchism, adventures in the streets, and excursions in the occult seem to have led them to a very strange and empty place of exaggerated conclusion and dramatic explanation. Violence is not the problem. I have no qualms here. My issues are how and why it is justified and proposed (and most likely never actually acted upon in this bloody-battled way, luckily I guess).

Even the list of quoted authors has become all-too-predictable. Walter Benjamin, James Baldwin, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ursula K. Le Guin, Diane di Prima, John Brown, Franz Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari, and Fredric Nietzsche (I wonder where Georges Bataille is?) have all made interesting and important contributions (some more than others). But when they are combined in this way, in this type of proposal, it all begins to feel like one continual project of propaganda for a specific flavor of revolutionary struggle, oh, I mean, insurrectional anarchism, um, sorry, combative anarchy, I mean millenarian anarchism, whatever. Yes, this world is ending, but to propose that people throw their bodies, hearts, minds, and spirits into its gears is absurd. To ask people to spend their lives preparing for an insurrectionary and apocalyptic bloody wave which will almost definitely (especially based on the current crop of hyper-domesticated cyberhumans) never come is infuriating. But, to guilt-trip people into becoming martyrs is inexcusable. Your Black Flame is another con job, another surrogate cause, another guilt-release valve, another act of posturing that will waste precious time, energy, and lives for nothing. Fiction is great, but that's not how this is presented or intended. Odd, irrational, and even disturbing beliefs can be important, even much needed at times, but this comes off as all-too predictable chest-beating nonsense mixed with performative spirituality (the kind that religions are built on).

Then we get to the final chapter of *Warlike, Howling, Pure*, the one that ties it all together, Their Way Forward: The Black Flame. We are told that "Anarchy is a spiritual practice, whether its practitioners understand it as such or not.

We may distinguish three interwoven currents within it: the devotional, the ancestral, and the initiatory." First, thanks for defining anarchy for us; funny how it is explained exactly the way you sell it in your book, oh wait, that's how propaganda works. And again, spiritual emptiness is a no brainer, especially in this appallingly alienated techno-post-modern nothingness age. Atheism has always been an unfulfilling half-step, rejecting the ideological, moralistic, and authoritarian mindset of religion (a system that enslaves our spirit) but never filling that void with a uniquely individual or tribally-shared spiritual relationship of people and place. So yes, spiritual emptiness is a colossal problem, but stuffing it with this religious garbage seems highly opportunistic.

As with much of the book, there are nuggets, statements, and thoughts that resonate with me in isolation, that I even agree with, but they almost always direct us towards a place I abhor, and this final section is certainly no exception. For instance, I would agree with Areïon, that anarchy is "a force within the world—a spirit." I often describe it this way, yet to call it "devotional" both traps it and forces us to submit to it, rather than it moving in us. It is not something to serve. It is not something to kill and die for (specifically). It is not a practice or a religion. It is an agent of chaos and freedom that cannot be reified. It is life itself: unmolested, unrestricted, uncontrollable.

Even to talk of anarchy in historical terms, as is often the case with insurrectionary types like Areïon, seems opportunistic, for we know not, nor live in, those contexts. How it flowed within those anarchic moments and people is purely speculation and often later agenda-derived for propagandistic purposes, not for anarchy. And while I gain personal strength from the written histories and statements of rebellious anarchists like Giuseppe Fanelli, Louis Lingg, or Emile Henry (all mentioned in the text), they are of certain situation and mostly not very transferable or fully understandable to us, especially in regard to martyrdom (of which Emile Henry was absolutely opposed to). This making of propagandist lore is littered throughout the book.

As far as Areïon's claim that "to name oneself an anarchist is to situate oneself within an ancestral lineage, of all those who have named themselves anarchists before." Well, yes and no. Intergenerational honoring and exchange is sorely missing in most people's lives, but this relationship is most potent closer to home, outside of identity, politics, or ideas than most anarchists are willing to reach and is more meaningful in more selective and situational ways than most anarchists move in regard to other selfdeclared anarchists. If we lined up most people who have called themselves anarchists throughout history, I would have very little to do with most of them, and the closer one comes to our current pathetic subcultural manifestation, the less so. I don't relate to people who primarily identify with what has become (and in many ways unfortunately always has been for most) a political identity or ideology. My grandmother—riddled with many problems from my perspective—had more to teach me and was more deserving of my love and remembrance than most anarchists.

True rebels, outlaws, drop-outs, deviants, and creative spirits warrant more respect from me and more to pass on than puffed-up play-warriors in some imagined struggle for liberation, and definitely much more than the millenarian insurrectionary religious zealots of this type. The parts of anarchist history that most anarchists fail to remember are the endless repeated mistakes both in theory and practice or the marginally-known exceptions to this norm (see the publishing project Enemy Combatant for some insights here). In the digital age, when every previous anarchist's thought and action is supposedly at one's fingertips, why do most continue to skip over the vital parts, have lame generalized and superficial takes, sink deeper into collectivism and leftism, play political games, promote reform, or even worse, martyrdom? And, on a slight side-note, despite what Areïon seems to imply over and over, anarchy does not equate to "black bloc". That is one tactic for one situation, not who anarchists are. The flattened perspective offered up here is disappointing and played out at best. Almost anyone can put on a black mask and smash shit up, the intentions and other ninety-nine percent of one's life means so much more than that over-spectacularized moment.

This idea that in "understanding anarchy as an ancestral lineage… anarchic life is born from anarchic death," follows and promotes this lame logic of intrinsic lineage and martyrdom. Perhaps Areïon is most direct here: "The willingness of the anarchists of old to kill and die — to be martyred — for the beautiful idea enters the realm of the religious, or more properly the devotional, from

Latin devotio, to "vow downwards," originally a battlefield vow to gods and spirits of the underworld of one's own life in exchange for victory." So the one thing that is truly our own, our life, we sacrifice for a victory we cannot share in—except in the spilling of our own blood which is promised to the gods? (What about the 72 virgins?) No. The spirit of anarchy does not ask such a sacrifice. It is not a god. If it were, I could only have a heretical and adversarial relationship with it.

To risk our lives for freedom or defense of autonomy or even as some nighttime anonymous attack against specific parts of the machine's apparatus (including individual actors), for sure, but that is very different than the religious martyrdom of some sort of notion of eternal glory and righteousness, I leave that for the multitude of fundamentalists and their endless wars. This all reminds me of a horrible take on the war in Palestine called "Gods Of Gaza". It had very similar language and ideas as *Warlike, Howling, Pure*. It glorified Hamas and considered them part of a righteous "Axis of Resistance" (of which the authors situated themselves and anarchists within) which will eventually prove victorious across the globe, and soon! I burned it during a spontaneous pyre while the eclipse was occurring this past Spring, not as a sacrifice or offering, but as a heretical show of disgust for this type of thinking. My black sun and theirs mean very different things, but that is another story.

The book continues on with Areïon's faithful cult-like ideas on so-called "anarchist initiation", filled with "secret rites and symbols, whose mystical significance can only be truly understood by the initiated." I would agree, anarchy is not for most domesticated humans, but not because they are not anointed in some holy fluids or not in possession of the sacred and ordained black mask that is suggested. Despite its relative simplicity, anarchy is sadly over most people's slavish heads (situationally not inherently). We are not proselytizers, we live anarchy, but we also are not a cult of those who hold the true wisdom either, mystifying the profane for only the high priests and prophetesses to comprehend and disseminate, making it sacred and removed from the dynamic elements of life. We are not the divine keepers of the holy Black Flame, nor stewards of the corny black and red banners, we are anarchists.

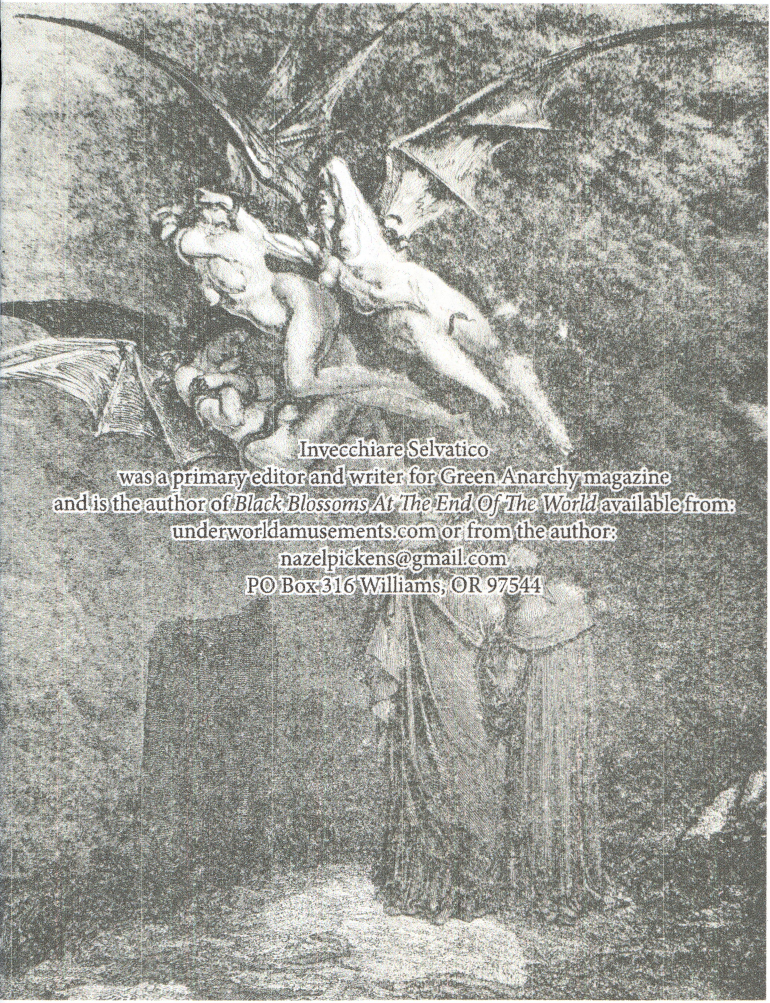
As the book concludes with "Eternal Fire", even when they describe interestingly immoral and more deviant historical (or possibly mythical) situations, martyrdom, self-sacrifice, and dutiful offerings of our blood for what Areïon has turned into a crusade of purity and righteousness is once again the main point, including very loaded and laughable statements like "May Day, the greatest of anarchist holy days".

I want to be absolutely clear: violence, revolt, belief, and spirituality, are not my problem at all. In fact, they all are important elements to my very being and my relationship to anarchy. Even elements of mythmaking, cult-like affinity, and ceremony can be interesting at times in certain ways. It is the "why" and "how" that I take issue with Areïon's offering of *Warlike, Howling, Pure*. In times of deep desperation, millenarian, apocalyptic, and martyr-fueled ideas and actions are not uncommon, but as anarchists, they offer absolutely nothing but cautionary lessons. They are only relevant to religious zealots, political opportunists, or hyperbolic rhetorical posturing. Warlike is for people fighting for power, Howling can be authentically wild, but is usually just a bunch of self-aggrandizing hot-air, and Pure, well, this is the nobrainer concept anarchists should run from or attack.

So, the clock is ticking, all odds are stacked against us (especially if your lame goal is to transform society into your self-righteous vision of it, rather than fight for your autonomy and freedom from society and for those you care about), Areïon goes back to throw a last-ditched attempt at a millenarian insurrectionary hail Mary pass made of morality, religion and ideology, proposed with fiery rhetoric and opportunistic readings of history and myth, and filled with martyrdom, convoluted ceremony, and your anarchist blood….

Hmmm. Can you say blitz!

(Sorry for the sports reference, I actually loath that form of professional competition, but it seemed fitting.)



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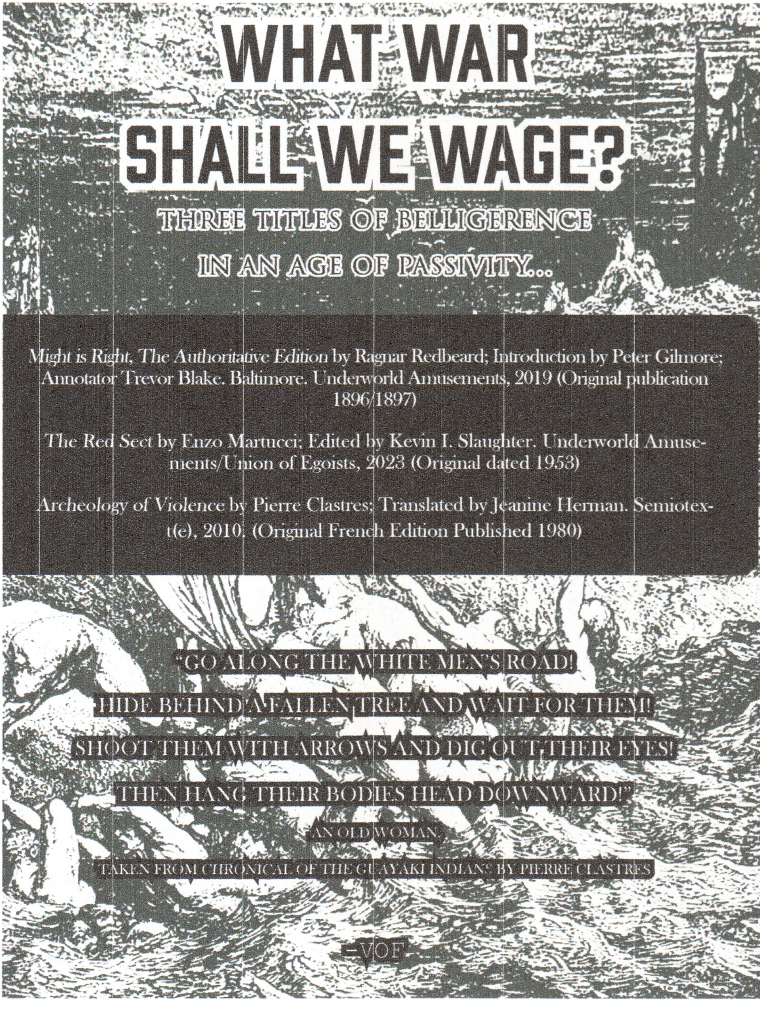

WHAT WAR SHALL WE WAGE?

THREE TITLES OF BELLIGERENCE IN AN AGE OF PASSIVITY...

Might is Right, The Authoritative Edition by Ragnar Redbeard; Introduction by Peter Gilmore; Annotator Trevor Blake. Baltimore. Underworld Amusements, 2019 (Original publication 1896/1897)

The Red Sect by Enzo Martucci; Edited by Kevin I. Slaughter. Underworld Amusements/Union of Egoists, 2023 (Original dated 1953)

Archeology of Violence by Pierre Clastres; Translated by Jeanine Herman. Semiotext(e), 2010. (Original French Edition Published 1980)

> "GO ALONG THE WHITE MEN'S ROAD!
>
> HIDE BEHIND A FALLEN TREE AND WAIT FOR THEM!
>
> SHOOT THEM WITH ARROWS AND DIG OUT THEIR EYES!
>
> THEN HANG THEIR BODIES HEAD DOWNWARD!"
>
> AN OLD WOMAN,
>
> TAKEN FROM CHRONICAL OF THE GUAYAKI INDIANS BY PIERRE CLASTRES

-VOF

INCENDIARY DEVICES

From 1896 to 1977 and back to the contemporary, this writing looks at three texts of fundamental kinship. Three texts which animate the anarchist's peculiar fascination. Three texts which look toward the world of war described by Hobbes and, each in their unique way, smirk at the truth of Hobbes' theoretical "state of nature." Three books which in some way celebrate this warfare and dismiss humanism and slave morality. Three books which are not so much joined in any direct way but operate by the same secret protocols -- three books of the old pacts and standards.

The first, *Might is Right*, is a book operating from a standard modernist conception of Nature. It is a tract of incendiary language -- constantly overstepping itself in terms of argument to perform rhetorical violence. Might is right and there are no rights but might because all illusions of rights and Right (morally) are defined, ultimately, by might. A fine tautology for a polemic.

The second title, Enzo Martucci's *The Red Sect,* is a somewhat obscure and brief text recently translated by Kevin Slaughter. *The Red Sect* is an important corrective to any *universal* conceptions of The Collective, showing the ideological depravity of communism and the slithering weakness of its purveyors. Yet Martucci is surprisingly subtle and brilliant, grappling with egoism and modernity with a sharp mind, and a lived experience few can match. Martucci is an extremist with an ideal of egoism that should make today's memegoists shiver with fear and tremble in their weakness.

The third title, *Archeology of Violence* by Pierre Clastres, is a collection of essays by the French student of Lévi-Strauss which pushes against Hobbes, not so much in his description of war but in how that war is waged. What is the "all" in the war of "all against all"? Is it really so simple as the monad who must be confronted with the world in its absolute chaos? But if Chaos came before Order, then before Order was "a relative nothingness, the non-being of *being*...the chaos in which all the elements were turbulently swinging...the chaos remained chaos" (Martucci, highly condensed, *The Red Sect*). And that chaos, according to Clastrean anthropology, is not a chaos of monads -- in fact that concept reflects a modern *state of order*. Modulating the Hobbesian thesis, we must contend that it was rather the chaos of a the centrifuge, of the "multiplication of the multiple" which created the primordial state of war. It was We against Them. Clastres gives us an anti-humanism that cannot be reconciled with the dominant strains of any radical theory.

What drives me to consider them together is the sense of some innate War -- permanent and beneath all apparent functioning of society. Who has not felt the creeping sensation that we are beset by a vulgar illusion of power? That there are deeper, older, more profound rules to this game which are being ignored? Who can really blithely sit by and smile in submission without feeling uncomfortable with their very status as Human, as member of some imaginary community of morphological continuity? Is there not something which, paradoxically, in an almost universal way, pushes us to resist this recruitment? Do we not all on some level seek to break away from the supposed species-body? Perhaps these questions create no echo for you, dear reader, and I hope my instigating then provides me with another important piece of evidence. NOT, apparently, of the universal resistant core inside each human, but instead evidence of a fundamental difference. Perhaps you and me are not the same and this flimsy plastic chain of humanity which pulls us tight together can be snapped by some and not by others. Perhaps, despite similitude of form and communication, we are not the same species at all.

Could it be that we have only marched down this road possessed by an evil demon of sameness? And perhaps always that demon provoked, on a long enough time scale, the viciousness of a revenge of the unique -- and the permanent torpor of those content to submit and be the same.

MIGHT IS RIGHT BUT THE SUN RULES ALL

One cannot get very far today without hearing the echoes of condemnation ground away any topic of singular obsession – all the fatal logics are not only problematic but "fascistic." Tiqqun lucidly made the point in *Introduction to Civil War:* "It tries to pass off anything that violently opposes Empire as *barbaric*, it deems *mystical* anyone who takes his own presence to self as a source of energy for his revolt, and makes anyone who follows the vitality of thought with a *gesture* a *fascist*."

With such a thought in mind I leaned back in a cloud of midsummer heat surveying a friend's garden in Southern Oregon and cracked open a handsome Loompanics edition of *Might is Right*. A properly skinny book – books of high rhetorical velocity and repetitive arguments should be short and not falter on explanation but rather soar on their own inner certainty.

I spent a few days there and for three mornings I, getting up before my hosts, would drink coffee and sip on the polemical brilliance of Redbeard. I didn't get very far, often gazing out to savor select lines. And I determined then to finish the book back home in the East. Eventually, I decided to order a brand-new copy from Underworld Amusements, a copy of the *Authoritative Edition* -- which, despite its confusing, superfluous and pedantic footnotes was indeed a handsome book.

Might is Right is a book-length repetition of its title. Possessed by a singular notion, Redbeard seeks to obliterate moral complexity with a single stroke, a single hammer of *Might*. From that singular blow all the glass castles of *weakness* would fall – at least their theory would falter. And perhaps they did – but unfortunately that collapse has birthed what could be called the mediocrity of Might itself.

There are no shortage of quotes to show this idea of Might, all of which are extremely pithy and well structured:

> "All ethics, politics and philosophies are pure assumptions, built upon assumptions. They rest on no sure basis. They are but shadowy castles-in-the-air erected by day-dreamers, or by rogues, upon nursery fables. It is time they were firmly planted upon an enduring foundation."

> "We must be, like Nature, hard, cruel, relentless."

Might is the basis of the world, it is the order of Nature. And here is where Redbeard's philosophy, if we are to call it that, is difficult to summarize without feeling the need to asterisk the *apparent* contradictions. Redbeard laments the loss of "real men" and the rise of perverse might. "Physical power is the basis of mental power." "Napoleon was Darwin on horseback" claims Redbeard, while "woman is two-thirds womb." In this pursuit of the true Nature which is behind, creeping behind even, all proliferations of anti-Nature Redbeard appeals to a now normative liberal position: catastrophe. The collapse will reveal the Nature which we have denied. Material might will conquer the abstract weakness *eventually*. Nature is thus Redbeard's utopia, and he chases it with the hustle of a scorned gladiator: "A MAN is under no obligation to obey anything or anybody." And yet: "Woe unto him, woe unto them, and woe unto our race if ever these lovable creatures [women] should break loose from mastership and become the rulers or equals of man. (But that is impossible.)" Thus "MAN" is under the obligations of Redbeard's conception of Nature; where it starts and where it ends.

But we should remember that the book is an incendiary device. It oversteps itself too much to conclude anything else. As such, it picks on everyone, makes everyone feel bad and launches *ad hominem* attacks on races and lineages of nearly every sort.

Redbeard is challenging us to respond, to prove our own belief, our own moral standard, on the battlefield. It is a provocation to War, to resurrect the Hobbesian scene and be done with this "artificialism." It would be flaccid to philosophically critique the errors since the order of challenge is an order of inevitable error, of overstepping oneself. Like "God is dead," it is there to provoke not prove. Nevertheless, one cannot help but find Redbeard ahead of his skis, believing his own bullshit, and preaching the return of an order of Nature defined by material strength. Such a vision has been solidly proven to be weak by the very might of a banal system. When he writes: "You cannot muzzle a tempest with a cobweb, bridle a volcano with a shoe-string, bottle up a cyclone in a powder horn, nor catch a tidal wave with a boat-hook. Neither can you put a bit between the teeth of the Strong." He assures himself with absurd examples but the Might of Nature has so clearly been conquered by the might of banal actions. Through the most boring and slavish actions weather is in fact changed, manipulated -- and all egos are now liberated to the digital bit, sucking on their identity like a good workhorse of the virtual.

As Might's reign dies, Redbeard finds the same solace as many political ideologies: inevitable collapse. Might is the Law of Nature (is there either really Law or Nature?) and its apparent removal from the scene presents us with two hypotheses:

1. Might has not left and the Might of Mediocrity, the brutality of banality, has simply conquered (and thus shown weak) the Might of strength and vigor. The weak are mightier by nature of their conquering and winning -- "a sure basis" which we cannot deny, only lament.

2. Nature has indeed retreated and the Laws by which it supposedly should function are over – but will return with a vengeance! An endpoint of the real real, the subject's oasis after removal of all the artificial. The return of Nature looms large, collapse and catastrophe guarantee the pure order and its return.

The second hypothesis is where Redbeard lands and, as such, he displays incredible weakness. Despite the similarity of Redbeard and Nietzsche in some respects, Redbeard falters exactly where Nietzsche sang so beautifully. Redbeard has little *amor fati*, love or acceptance of where he is, seduced too often to the petulant whining of a weak child who can only condemn and call forth his sacred references.

It is indeed this error which is also his strength, however -- the situational strength of the book and its incendiary core. Without this petulant attitude there is no gross overstating, no rhetorical flash, no anger. Something in Redbeard resists this Might which must be Right, something irreducible and *beyond force* animates his intention and writing. He sings for a return, a new beginning in the arcane world of primitive virtues. He does not promise us, smartly, easy success. Rather Redbeard is warning us all of both the consequences of Might, its ultimate vengeance and, at his best, the irreversible status of the victor in a world of slavishness.

So we cannot really condemn him for putting Might into a Nature which is not defined by its constituent parts but by its ideal. Because this is the illusion which serves him, it becomes the tension for his wicked catapult of words. Nevertheless, this same error of Nature is again reflected in his rather sloppy scientism that parades as authentic virtue (if rational thought did not yield to a conclusion of Might would he be in error?) and enables his rather obvious racism -- though one shouldn't mention it to the annotator of the *Authoritative Edition* who both condemns and dismisses it creating a strange dissonance in the notation.

Under any singular aegis -- force or might, pleasure or pain -- under any singular universality there is first miscomprehension and hubris, which is of course *weak*. To reduce and limit your analysis will always be a sign of weakness. Since all is Might, we are seduced to a singular fragment and figure of the mind and thus suffer the weakness of a pathology which no sun, planet, volcano or lion ever had to endure – that simple doubt, word, echo – language itself installs a weakness, one we can only resent. And Redbeard, like many, reproduces a morality while he seeks to obliterate it. The morality of Nature, returning in our time as the absolute obliteration of enchantment in the name of ecology. The morality of material confidence, which seeks in proliferation of every useless widget and technology its own immediate and ceaseless proof of greatness. But if all action and purpose serves one true arbiter, which is also the judge and executioner, then what has been liberated by this revealing of Might is nothing but another slavishness to exterior abstraction.

The world is but illusion but it is a sign of weakness to obey vulgar illusions.

One must only serve the true illusions, that is freedom. *Might is Right* is an industrial book. Redbeard obeys vulgar illusions of science – the book fails. Redbeard becomes paradoxically successful – it fails because it is weak. If it is all Might then why cut out some temporal zone of Might's failing? Like all the suckling agents of science it is to provide another alibi for their own weakness.

Might is Right is an infantile idea of reducing both terms – but it is still more stupid to think "might is wrong." Might is nothing, but should I beat your ass I will still breathe in the air of victory. But we should still consider Redbeard's final reference before moving off of this cursory evaluation and onto other titles and ideas. Redbeard ends up grounding his material interpretation of the world on the solar guarantee:

> "Right, in its broadest and deepest sense, can be logically defined… as the manifestations of solar energy, materialized through human thought and thew upon Battlefields – that is to say, Nature's Supreme Court. Might is victory, and victory establishes rightness. Might is cosmic power in chemic operation, and man (in his own sphere) is heliocentric force on two legs. Might is mighty, and must prevail."

But we must ask, then, why any clarification would ever be needed of Might? For if the mighty define all that is, the splendor of the solar expenditure being might itself, then Redbeard does not actually look for this absolute of might but the return of a reign of Might, of strength and brawn, of returning the world to an arithmetic that is less disturbed than the industrial one – where "extensions" of the human seem to prove only the might of the machine and technics itself. Redbeard scorns the technical for the wrong reason. He thinks it confers weakness, but we must battle it for its successes, not its failings. We must be at war with the easy manipulation of the sun, an irreducible element of intensity, into clicking and tapping widgets and life which spends its existence articulating death. We must be mightier and more cunning than that which prevails, not because it will collapse, but because it will succeed.

Given this banal reality of technology, this mass dismissal of intensity, we can better understand why *Might is Right* would be scorned and tossed away by the chattering classes. One might lament the dismissal of *Might is Right* by intellectuals, academics and other weak actors. But why appeal to the weak and pathetic mongers of goodness and social reform? It is too long that the anarchist, the egoist, the Bataillean students of Acéphale, the Übermensch students of Neitzsche should run around "like chickens with their heads cut off" (Guillame) waiting for the media to confirm their theories or the academics to take them seriously. All those who have bowed before the servility of knowledge as a world of Truth and Meaning have shot past whatever glimmer of accuracy their masters of thought tried to show them. In some important way the dismissal saved *Might is Right*, confirmed its incendiary status – its kamikaze intention. Now that it has tossed to the Satanists and obscure publishers it is all for the better. For what Redbeard condemns has only spread. Indeed it has since then evolved and the intelligence of weakness proliferates.

"The fear of death is the beginning of slavery."

– Redbeard

DON'T YOU KNOW THEY WANT TO KILL THE SOUL?

"It is not true…that man is and has always been determined solely by economic factors, which in Marxist philosophy is what the idea is in Hegelian philosophy. If there were no different factors acting on us, if everything reduced to an absolute from which everything derives, if material and ideal and sentimental life were identified in the indistinct unity of an inconceivable monism, then this immanent absolute, this unique whole, could not be called an economic factor."

-Enzo Martcucci

Enzo Martucci spent a large portion of his life in prison. An intrepid egoist unafraid of ad hominem and hearsay, Martucci's work did not find publication in English for over 60 years. And even in Italian most of his work carried letters of warning of the vile things inside. The reader can investigate for themselves the supposedly vile contents of Martucci. Here, what is pertinent to the general discussion, and which in some ways can help us link the philosophy of Might and Clastrean War, is Martucci's analysis – brief, sweeping, and brutal – of communist theory.

> "Marxism…asserts that social harmony is the fatal product of history, the extreme point to which we will arrive as a result of economic determinism and independently of human will. It is not understood, then, why communists strive to realize their society by any means

> when they could contemplate their navels and wait for the ripe pear to fall of its own accord."

For Martucci all of life is a swirling of its constituent parts but also, importantly, none of them at all. Take conflict, when one reason is not enough, another will arise: "Even if it were possible to eliminate the economic causes that drive individuals against each other in armed conflict, war would persist because there are other anthropological and psychological causes that determine conflicts."

Martucci's ability to have nearly flayed his own ego, his ability to stare into it – only somewhat cold and detached, more often than not warm and caring – is quite remarkable. The motivations of historians and political ideologues are immediately naïve for Martucci. He speaks with the confidence of one not in denial of where and when he would fight: "Today, I am forced to fight against my fellow human beings for a piece of bread and a woman. Tomorrow, communism will fill my stomach and the book of love will provide me with all the women I desire. But despite this, I will continue to fight to make my ideas triumph over others…"

This analysis of communism implies something central to any political project of merit: a recognition of the multitudinous *forms* which life can and will take. In Clastrean anthropology, this is a prerequisite for the primitive war machine. For Martucci there will always be "…opposing forms that sometimes tolerate or help each other, but other times clash against each other." And this is why, as an aside, there is a certain lacking in many discussions of "voluntary servitude" which misinterpret the analysis of the "great misfortune" as an analytical tool for the teleological expunging of the state, which liberates one equitable unanimity. Once identified the radical can conquer this factor of voluntary submission as well as he can conquer the economic, for instance. There is a tendency to see Stirner's perspective or even La Boétie himself as proposing a methodology for the erasure of a psychic impairment: submission in its voluntary form can be removed. But here is where we step over the voluntary completely! It is not just by acquiescing, by saying "ok, sir, whatever you need" – no, it is a joyful exuberance, an "ecstasy of communication" (Baudrillard), in the modern media state. Voluntary is insufficient, it is a manifestation of desire in its pure form since now submission is *also* liberation of the contents of desire. The slavery of modernity has perfected voluntary servitude by tying that slavery to quantifiable liberation: sex, drugs, identity, mutability, the virtual double of any content. The master has collapsed and now slaves drive around their own personalities, quantified, legible, obvious. A ubiquitous *form* has taken over each and every participant's life. The state collapses in importance but so does the status of voluntary submission. No longer to voluntarily submit under the sword, to perform as subject when needed -- but now to live permanently in the kingdom of the digital, a permanent slave who has been liberated to all content and the expression of nothing but the virtual form.

To return to Martucci, he remains clear that there will never be peace or harmony, never be a resolution of any pernicious issue. One in fact must act, rebel, fight, because of this. Martucci comes very close to Redbeard. The communist may have a fine list of enemies the anarchist can support fighting, but they convert themselves into another universal enemy, another character of the state, another novel variant of the psychic disease of economic humanism. Martucci is friends with these communists, in prisons, in cafes – but never does he fear condemning them, embarrassing them in his well-told memoirs of betrayal, such as the opening tales of an argument that ends with Martucci claiming his communist friend has no soul. The communist smirks: "Yes, you are right, I have no soul: we communists don't have it. And we'll make you lose it too. Our goal is to *kill the soul.*"

Martucci is not arguing for his ideal over the communist ideal, but rather of the impossibility of realizing political ideals generally. Most importantly, before ideals and economics, there are the forms of life, which Martucci says are irreducible in their *proliferation* – this is a vital bulwark against both communism and "Kropotkinism" as it makes impossible their project of making all humans one "flock spirit." We see that what is at base for Martucci is the fight against *harmony, reconciliation,* and *universalism.*

Then there is Need: "Marxists believe…according to their simplistic materialism, humans are equal sheep dominated only by the need for sustenance; and when everyone has a full stomach, they live in peace and always agree with each other." Unsparing in his condemnation of this reductionism Martucci tells us:

> "It is vain to say that when the contradictions of economic interests are resolved and life is rationally organized, man will lose his antisocial impulses and spontaneously harmonize with his fellow human beings. Instead, man is not determined by interest and reason, as

> materialists and rationalists believe. He is an extreme, conflicted, and irrational being with different and opposing feelings, powerful and contradictory passions, and wants to satisfy them all. He wants to do good when he feels like doing good and evil when he feels like doing evil. Man demands freedom, but this is not the primacy of reason over the dark psychic background. Instead, it is the freedom of caprice, fantasy, instinct, romantic, individualistic freedom that rebels against the yoke of reason and mandatory well-being."[1]

Martucci takes on in his other works well-known Priests, Marx, Kropotkin and, in a strange sense, Redbeard. Remember, it is Reason which reveals the rule of Might, Reason which illuminates the holy tautology of Might. The perfect circle of Might's universality. Martucci proves himself a partisan against universal harmony, and, one can extrapolate, against any universal account of desire, seduction, violence, or power itself.

"PRIMITIVE SOCIETY IS A LOCUS OF A PERMANENT STATE OF WAR."

-- CLASTRES

This all brings us to Clastres, who looked in primitive society for some mirror which might reveal a crucial and base *lack* in civilized societies. To identify, outside of materials and structure, some element of invigoration that motivates and maintains, not the expression of an ideal human nature, but the primordial articulation of free life. So enters violence and force. Not so much as measures but as strategy and potential. War is the expression of a latent possibility always near and precious. Apropos Redbeard, who can really stomach a full expression of Might at every turn? Its possibility is sometimes enough.

War is perfectly clear in Clastres, so clear it becomes almost impossible to see. War evokes in Clastres both the fundamental break with a world of order and "coercion" and also the absolute presence of a strategy so perplexing in our current states of servility that it becomes nearly incomprehensible. This "permanent state of war" is not a nationalistic war, it is not a war of simulation, it

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[1] "It is too simple to argue that first there are needs, authentic values, etc., and then they are alienated, mystified, recuperated, or what have you. This humanitarian Manicheanism explains nothing."

"This bio-anthropological postulate [primary needs] directly launches the insoluble dichotomy of primary and secondary needs: beyond the threshold of survival, man no longer knows what he wants." - Baudrillard is of a more sacred order of illusion: "The strategy is the same for all communities: to preserve in their autonomous being, to conserve themselves as what they are, undivided We's."

We have to then imagine how such a We could exist and, critically, the horizon of its disappearance (and the possibility of reemergence). This We, this unified being which actually never is Being but is a becoming of itself always in articulation, has haunted all corners of political thought. It is the ghost of this unified being, this sacred illusion, which haunts Neihbur in the "closed society" as equally as it haunts Hobbes in his simulacrum of unity in the sovereign. Bataille and Baudrillard, Ellul and Perlman – all pursued by specters of the "organic community" (Ellul). Some pursued more earnestly than others. Clastres has a significant advantage in this prattle of authenticity. Clastres is an anarchist *first* and his focus on the "political" anti-institution of war makes clear the anarchic chaos of the We. This "permanent state of war" is the "multiplication of the multiple" -- it is not a unary truth hiding beneath illusion -- it is the multiplication of a sacred illusion of purpose and togetherness -- it is the collective fiction of our importance which allows for a base and absolute freedom. A freedom from the time before the "great misfortune" of voluntary submission. For War -- not the "limited reality of armed conflict or combat" but the "permanence of its possibility" -- is an active engagement, it is the pushing against the latent possibility of servitude. The state is, whether we like it or not, is, especially at this point, a co-eternal (Levy) factor of human existence. That is to say it is not just evil force or supernatural forces which are the absolute evil of power and domination, coercion and command. No, that is far too simple. Instead, we must understand the brutal existence of servility, of bootlicking, of conformism, of manipulation, of all the intricacies of how the "human" *submits*.

Perhaps there was once a cornucopia of styles of submission, where the unified being of the community made bargains and wagers and volunteered their submission because it was equal sign of their capacity to withhold that submission. But now we are all *human* and we all must obey the logic and law of the universal, a moral imperative of crude and vulgar second nature. A generalized aggrandizement of all, this time by submission, to a universal which posits a functional particularity – a resolution of all issues by a singular virtual account.

War, on the other hand, is active, War is the stuff of freedom, it is the activity which corresponds to a lack of servility. It constantly disrupts and unifies, it is the emptiness and the solace, a tension which brings each of us (indeed through Might) both further into the unique of ourselves and the dissolution of that unique in others. It creates a sort of cultural personality that you participate in or leave, a kind of species that you either are or are not. Above and beyond biological status it is the winnowing of diversity to a level of perpetually disrupted cohesion.

This reading of War, despite the obvious protests of the realists, must then be read as a *strategy* dependent on the existence first of a We which defends a savage kinship that violates any pretense of humanism. Humanism and human rights, the post-war rules-based order all then become what they have always been, a repression of War in its state of nature, its first state. Under the sigil of moral obviousness War is condemned as an evil but Hobbes was right: without the sovereign and the apparatus of governance there will be War – but this state of nature would not be a war of "all against all" but a continual possibility of war between Them and We. Not a battle on the homogenous ground of the human, not a civil war for the true human, but a battle of opposing (non)species, a battle which does not concede the universality of form and maintains that we are all in our illusion of togetherness always separated from other understandings. It is the paradoxical fulfillment of Truth's promise of ascendency (Merton) and the consistent deconstruction of any universal status of Truth (Nietzsche).

Clastres saw that the scale and demographics of groups would immediately change the possibility of this state of war. And to some degree Clastres accepts materials as well. But never does Clastres mistake materials as inherit secret forces or innate property. That is to say Clastres rejects Marxism (including its morphological variants like "cultural materialism") and Structuralism equally. Marxist ethnology is, for instance, "null at its root." For Clastres it is this line of freedom we must deal with, our situation demands the Primitive as an ultimate reference and inspiration, but it must take on the "political" first, it must do away with these pacified notions and projections which color the primitive world as a complex of exchange or material poverty. It is a world of unceasing war against the possibility of domination. It is freedom articulated.

HAUNTED BY SERVITUDE

Us moderns all are haunted by voluntary servitude. Either as our fate or our "desire". The war declared in the era of the subject's ultimate expression (Redbeard), the war of all against all, was only *purely* expressed in the early industrial era -- language expresses it as it disappears. *Might is Right* declares a yearning for this irreducible world of conflict -- when all weakness has collapsed all that's left is a resurgence of the field of Might. This chaos which haunted Hobbes excites Redbeard. But despite its vicious fatality and calling forth of some tribal ethnic quality, Redbeard ends up being the screaming sub-Übermensch (the penultimate mutant) writing his mourning of a great defeat. Staging as a battle cry, it ends in lamentations. It is perhaps not the Subject which is irreducible after all, but rather the constituency of the Subject with others through time, it is this irretrievable continuity that we live through the mourning of and which defines the end of War in the Clastrean sense. War replaced with conflict. Singularities battling for survival boiled down now to swarms of drones from a multitude of nations -- nameless sameness, an ambiance of conflict, the terror of meaninglessness.

There will always be a mirror for each of us but the hallucination we project on that returning image is without any bounds to an objective reality. It seems as though either the We is consumed (civilization), or it splinters through a complex of intensity, illusion and the unique (War). Violence is irreducible and to vanquish it under teleological humanistic purpose is pathetic. One is left to think some absolute, some still relevant mirror for *us* to engage and see ourselves and thus contemplate a strategy for change. Human Nature, Material Reality, Catastrophic Evils, Generalized Collapse, Identity, Grievance.

Clastres says that it is only in primitive society that all others reveal themselves equivalent. And though we now live in a time when the master/slave has been subject to the discourse on the nano and thus made an infinitesimal internal drama and no longer an external struggle, we still live by the rules of domination, we still live after and in the strategies of the "great misfortune" which La Boétie described as voluntary servitude. Its oversimplification may be off-putting for some, but it is the fundamental truth it grasps that is of interest, its overly large margins are there merely to add resonance to the idea's mental splash. Whatever the case, we are haunted by a before and an after. Only *now* do we have the burden of condemning ourselves to less comfort, less convenience, less *material might* to assert ourselves, to prove some other might, some other *right*. Worse than that, we are left with just ourselves to resurrect this battlefield, monads who have gone past even the peak of the subject.

It is in the primordial form of this context that Hobbes becomes something of the first think-tank representative, postulating the possible catastrophes which may theoretically obliterate the state – binding the state to vigilance, not just in its particular expression as king, empire or nation, but in its absolute existence in any form as the fundamental priority of all societies. The enemy of my enemy is my friend, and all states operate against this anarchy which remains at base the primary threat. If voluntary servitude haunts the anarchist, primitive anarchy haunts the state. Redbeard saw Nature returning Might to its proper place as an inevitability -- and importantly Hobbes did not see the sovereign as guaranteed. It was, from the beginning, a matter of action. The voluntary part of servitude was both ignored and taken for granted. What Clastres sees in primitive warfare challenges the entire structure articulated by Hobbes. Rather than being a point of theoretical time bound to the laws of nature, always one collapse away or existing in the primordial soup of the species, primitive warfare must be articulated in its "permanent" possibility. Primitive warfare answers Hobbes with a howl -- as Martucci says, it *shows its teeth* to the sovereign, and marks itself as enemy and lays down an eternal demarcation between two irreconcilable worlds.

Primitive warfare is a war against domination generally says Clastres. A war both against the incursion of others and *for* "unified being." Clastres is maintaining a radically anti-humanist view. Through radical diffusion of groups away from a singular universal -- while simultaneously creating unity of belief and purpose within the community -- there is the breeding ground of a savage egoism which battles the inexplicable yet seemingly indelible Others. Perhaps the Other who has bent the knee, who has given in to the desire to submit (we cannot exile duty from these discussions).

Only through War can there be no state. War between states is in effect not War at all, it is a further homogenization, it is death in the name of sameness, in the name of coalescing, in the name of obedience. Primitive war is the eternal battle of those who will not kneel, who will not behave. Primitive War is the essence of a bond beyond human, which claims outside of all essentialisms, the primacy of an absolute freedom which no comfort or convenience can deliver. An ineffable refusal beyond the contours of this system's meaning. All systems are systems of control thus the transcription of warfare by Clastres is exhilarating and dangerous. It makes nearly effable what perhaps should never have been. Nonetheless it is here. But it is not War for war. It is War for a We, for a kind of community outside the realms of a human understanding but under the sign of a ferocious uniqueness beyond the speakable.

THE CHIEF AND IMPERIALISM

A lack of the exercise of power is the primary Primitive Virtue reading Clastres, and it redefines Redbeard's thinking of Might outside of a strict individualistic Ego. Imperial and material strength take on different dimensions of measure and meaning with Clastres' observations and analysis. We can note here that Redbeard sees in some way, briefly, that there is a mirage of self-sufficiency which stands in for but does not replace some necessary instance of kin (to replace the language of family, community, friends…I will say kin to encompass any substantive connectivity). "A man's FIRST duty in this world is to HIMSELF, and the word "himself" includes those near and dear ones who have twined their tendrils around his heart." We are then overlapping kinships, and this means that despite Might's providence, freedom is reversible to duty. In the throes and pleasure of absolute freedom we serve a duty to the purity of Nature, its plan prior to corruption. Even in the throes of "himself" we are returned to a duty which is not the ego. Never do we leave the necessity of others – even to understand our own solitude! Our individual beings, who alone cannot refract to a singularity and share the glimmer of some metaphysical obelisk, must be liberated in modernity to endless simulations and simulacra to feed on the procession of the *inadequate* – both our lack of *unique* and our lack of *unification*. We could say that Might without War and We is simply an empty term marking a theoretical violence in empty space that has never shown its face. A Hobbesian drama which requires a civilized mirror to understand.

The imperialism of the ego, the subject, would then, perhaps, be a simulation of an earlier warfare and the zany endless search for "material" might would become a *weakness*, a derision of might as it would be for the unified being (those within a sacred illusion). The might of the Guayaki in Clastres classic ethnography is established by their Otherness from the Whites and other Natives. Even their *lack* of material strength, in their reflection of agriculture and the unevenness of materials between them and their enemies, is a point of honor. The Whites have the most, but it is the way it is. No ressentiment. An *amor fati* which makes the Mightiest White of brawn and strength blush with the weakness of their grievance.

However, in the world of modernity, the world we wish to escape, the lack of *ressentiment* takes on a different character – and it continues always to morph. Martucci makes clear that Imperialism and Egoism are not so far apart. Martucci reminds us that the line between the anarchist bomb thrower and the imperialist conqueror is not so large: "Against every despot, in general servitude, rise the few men who do not want to adapt to slavery; but the despot and the rebel are equivalent manifestations of intense, tropical, exuberant life that does not tolerate restraints and limitations. Therefore, anarchy and imperialism are closer than one might think." There are, in our world of order and generalized weakness, perverse expressions of the unique. Imperialism itself seems almost preferable to the global hegemonic order of virtual doubles and their sanguine flaccid blood-sac originals. Martucci here also echoes Redbeard. Clastres, however, offers us a synthesis of this potential in The Chief which highlights the depravity of our modern drama and thus challenges us to higher and better goals.

"The Chief" in the Clastrean sense defines the echo and permanence of the Unique -- a reminder that one in a sacred illusion is bound by an ecstatic engagement of "will" with this community of being. Its purity is never pure, its unification is never perfection, it is a pulsating illusion. The Chief is both powerful (in the sense of expressing the group, being the one who talks) and powerless (in that if The Chief talks too much, you don't listen to him). Turning to Siberian hunters briefly, we can see that there is a continuum and articulation of this savage freedom which neuters any possibility of political power at the most basic level of gesture (S. Engel). In the Yukaghirs' world one doesn't even instruct, even if in danger. It is for the unique (sometimes reincarnate) soul to learn each way, not because there is no wrong way, but because the wrong way will be revealed to them and only then can there be any learning, any incorporation. (Willerslev, *Soul Hunters*). Instruction, education, pedantic universal explanations are anathema to a community of unified being (a becoming). Not even with potential injury do others intervene. It is a double promise, one reducible perhaps to the Unique or the Other, the other to unification. Even a reincarnation is not a *reproduction*. So we see perhaps a "union of egos" in some primitive cultures…but speaking of it in that way seems only to pursue specters of real individualism or real collectivism -- both of which promise us only simulations of the eras we scorn ceaselessly.

The primitive gathering of "egos" is the proliferation of packs in an endless world, perhaps best not yet known as limited container (cartographic consequences). A complete obliteration then of the prison, both by union and diffusion. Truth as collective illusion can be fulfilled and, simultaneously the universality of Truth's reign may be obliterated.

Are these aspirational, obtainable circumstances? Can we return? Do all things that have died hold the possibility of resurrection? It is not at all certain, not even for the ego, which now is but a corpse for your digital double to feast on. But what we can say is that the reincarnation of an idea, no matter how long-dead, will take on a new and unique form.

Whatever the case, The Chief's might is not at all The Chief's and Redbeard misses the most obvious point when he takes such vulgar claims of The Chief's Might as objective. Ultimately, for Redbeard, to celebrate the plunder of Might is to celebrate weakness, offending the true nature which he whines and laments the retreat of. Might is made of the weak, the weak become mighty.

But we can not only challenge Redbeard. When Clastres says "no rich exploiters of the poor" to help summarize the primitive absence of power he betrays (as he often does in the inferior *Society Against the State*) a perverse egalitarianism, a leveling of all to one and none. But unified being and war/warrior imply nothing of equality, but rather a novel ineffable togetherness -- experiential empathy rather than material equality, which is only ever a fever dream of the West -- some way for us to reconcile the fracture of unified being with a universality that can reach and encompass all things, through the vehicles of the individual and value. The community and the ego: in the end both are low-order illusions, they are cultivated and doubled, rehearsed, defended, and, ultimately, they are simulacra without impulse (Klossowski) – they hold little invigorating possibilities which are not the system's invigoration.

In favor of the thesis of Might we could look at the sovereign and say, yes, this one person, whether under the sword or voluntary servitude is a vision of Might. Think of each and every conqueror and despot. But certainly, the system then expands abstractions in order to, like a demon of weakness who is in fact then the paradoxical mightiest, disinvest Might from the One Power once again. It is ironic but we have moved back closer in our age to Clastres' Chief, the empty face of non-power. But this time the chief does not emblemize a community but is a masquerade mask of stakes and importance, a symbol of the consequences of our submission. Which is why when Trump has won there is only tears, no political rage (social media posts of anger are soaked in the brine of tears and self-pity). The battle is lost, the battle of Might and Weak has been lost to the overwhelming might of our profane illusions, of the technics of illumination, of the objective presence of our most manifest virtual doubles. The illuminated Golem possessed at root by our "savage dementia" (Ceronetti). We must fight its perverse effects because of its success…its might.

Something else is possible – this contingent thought is perhaps irreducible. Yet, to mourn possibility -- which is radical politics in the 21st century -- is to precisely reject *amor fati* and letting go of Might's *true* reign, nature's pure operatic telling of the strong -- as well as letting go of this centrifuge of anti-hegemony, a War that isn't anymore. *Amor fati* requires, for us now, new metaphors with stronger resonance. Perhaps all we can do is shatter, dismember, abandon and burrow under. Perhaps there is only an ineffable strategy. Perhaps speaking is done and these words are like glass in the feet of what could be an intrepid warrior walking towards a savage illusion.

It may be because we live so decidedly on the wrong side of this misfortune that freedom is simply to be without this psychic virus of submission, this non-morphological speciation of those who kneel, those who might diagnose and pathologize whatever secret species still runs through their desolate sphere of banality and control as "oppositional defiant" or even "autistic."

If there is a conspiracy against Might, if Might's providence and War's inevitability are innate and constantly tempered, if there is nothing but a swelling of force and violence then the conspiracy to contain it is the mirage of equality. The idiocy of polls and studies, theories and universalisms which seek to foster the perversion of equanimity. So it is that we must return to the first states, not in their ideal, but in their savagery.

Power is in the end nothing. Could not always the tribe kill The Chief? Even today, it is the frame of submission that holds us, not power. Power is everywhere, sure, thus it is nowhere. Appealing to a natural order is always to appeal to a synthetic one: the fantasy of contingency. If only we had not done *x* then some other path would have been found. A reductionist utopia of science fiction. We are all subject to the only valid social experiment, all bound to what is and not what is not. The might that rules us is and always will be in the *now*.

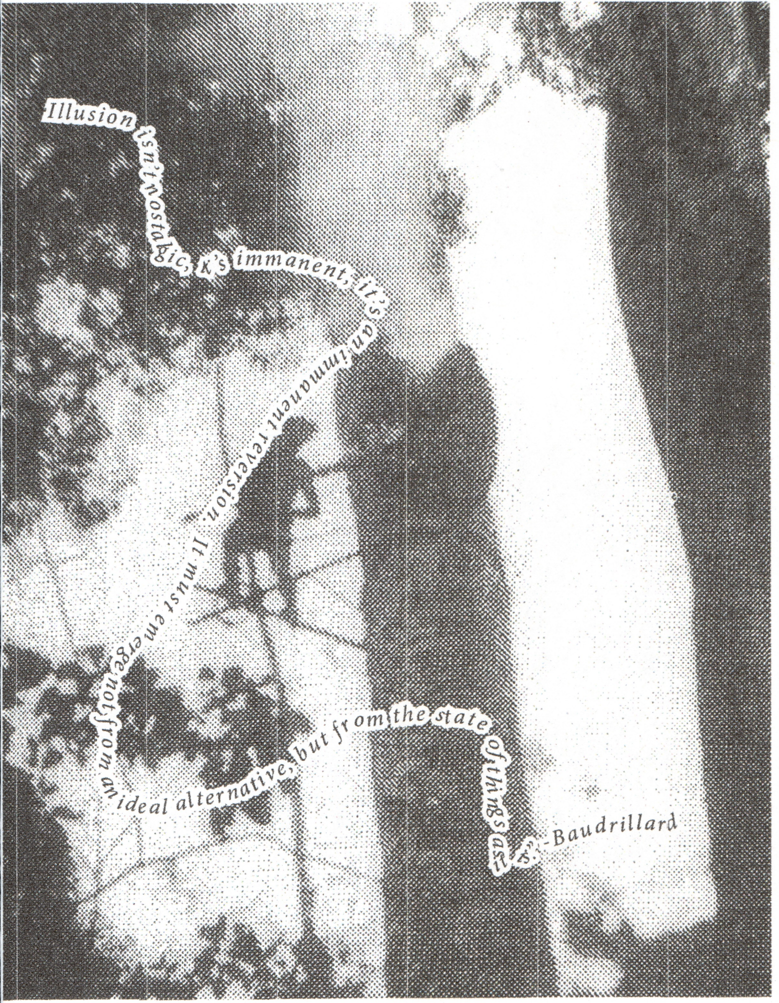
What is clear reading these dissolving classics (escaping their place as reference in the postmodern soup) is that this humanitarian drama of absolute limits, of the human's final limit, the breaking point, the line we cannot cross, collapse itself… only shores up a weak hope. An exasperated value of some other time. Drones fly in military formation, the brain can be linked to machine, the entire drama of bioengineering has nearly been left as problematic for our conscious worry. Nanotechnology is past this horizon as well. Assimilated dystopian technologies accumulate. There is no known limit to this process (we can perhaps only hope that there might be one at all) and we are not crime fighters. We are trapped in an unrelenting human drama of discovering the depths of depravity while celebrating it as goodness, misunderstanding medium and the message relentlessly. But we cannot scorn the system for discovering what we, the radicals and rebels, perhaps showed it. Yes, there is really no known limit to it all and it is for this reason that we are Enemy -- to reestablish some protocol beyond this "pebble in a dry gourd" (Jeffers) called Humanitarianism where our Might and our War and our Chaos might again show their faces.

Cioran's most important essay for anarchists, "On a Winded Civilization", makes the paramount but ignored point that civilizations are kept by instigation, by invigoration, by poking and prodding. They do not ever live by the calmness or stillness of their victory. It must always be moving; it must always be accumulating catastrophes and collapses. It is the finest machine of creating and absorbing death on unfathomable scales that has ever existed. It even makes the living dead. The introduction of biological death and the removal of an *after death* allows for an exponential population destined to the same ending of nullity. The snake oil revolutionaries *are now* the collapsists. They fundamentally misunderstand – because they are obsessed with resources and raw materials as if the status of materials was not infinitely mutable – the strategy of collapse. Even after the collapse of the USSR, even after the Roman example, even after early South American civilizations… all collapse, all simplification has, to this point, been a strategic realignment of forces. A considered reevaluation often indexed to technological change and implicit globalization. What collapses have simply passed us by as minor invigorating events? The collapse of the standard of currency, certainly. The collapse of conventional oil reserves, possibly. The collapse of democratic idealism? Why not. These are ephemeral for a system of order which is not at all propelled by its individual components or ideologies but by *its failures measured against a goal of success, it is suspended in its own fallacy able to make do with whatever it has.*

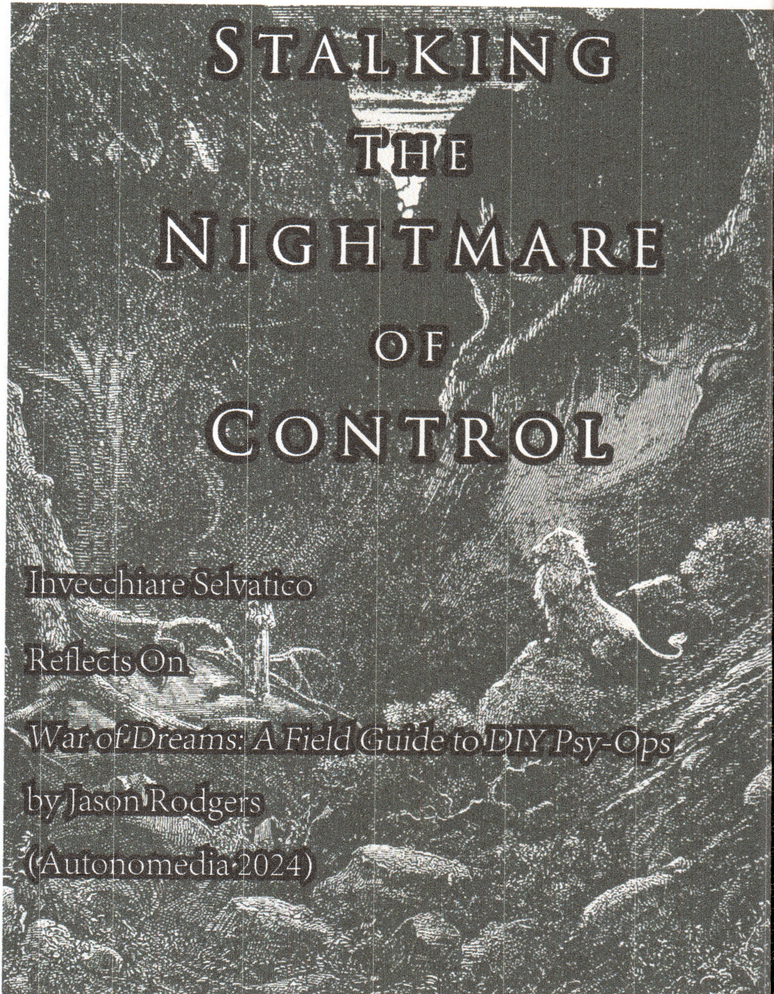
"If today's ecological modifications are caused by malignant psychic forces acting in our world (in our sphere), fighting them with crude material means (imbecilic sophism: good versus bad Technology) can only provoke their scorn, because they are perfectly indifferent to material and practical means. The only thing that could force them to retreat would be a total shattering of the dominant fixed idea, a consequence of some unthinkable preaching, a conversion, a teshuvah, that, moving along mute paths, strikes out against the obscure currents and rips the gigantic weave of threads. An alternative is the protection of a certain number of Righteous Men who are very powerful, aware of the fact, and busy warding off the blow. Our poor ecologists have to content themselves with saving three or four trees, while in one fell swoop the demons knock down three hundred thousand trees across the world." -Guido Ceronetti

We (the enchanted reader, not the human) want to return or belong to something, but this desire strikes two paths. One is the destruction of all points of reference, a demolition of all things and an accounting for them in a new language, a double that resolves all issues of uncertainty. Ecology and virtuality are its tools. Once we can take full credit for the active participation in that which is legibly and objectively good and useful we may be freed from any haunting primary state, any other notion of being something that comes from somewhere else – rather we can all be what we are told we are.

The second path is that of return to first states, not in any vulgar sense of objective first states but an original state of ludic violence and lucid force, to that centrifugal chamber of unified being which does not mechanically produce anything but accumulates sparks, sacred illusions which give us the irreducible and inhuman forms of territory, seduction, death, pleasure… These sparks, these illusions which might enchant us have been largely snuffed out, the cool waters of the postmodern leave only splash and flailing. So why not flail with all our Might, that we may, by sheer will, drain this pond of depravity and feel again the warm sun of our singular spectacular freedom.



Illusion isn't nostalgic, it's immanent, it's an immanent reversion. It must emerge not from an ideal alternative, but from the state of things as it is. -Baudrillard



STALKING THE NIGHTMARE OF CONTROL

Invecchiare Selvatico

Reflects On

War of Dreams: A Field Guide to DIY Psy-Ops

by Jason Rodgers

(Autonomedia 2024)

In my review of Jason Rodger's first book, *Invisible Generation: Rants, Polemics, and Critical Theory Against The Planetary Work Machine* (see: anarchistnews.org/content/'cause-i-see-you), I wrote: "As they ponder the banality and degradation of modern life, non-ideological anarcho-primitivism meshed and mashing with anarcho-surrealism, critiques of contemporary and historical philosophical pitfalls and their self-referential trappings, and so much more, Jason emotes provocation. In a time where almost anything remotely interesting or transgressive has been absorbed, reconstituted, and sold back to the anemic herd willing to lap up just about anything served to them and call it "radical", Jason still finds edges that have not been smoothed down, still pokes, tears, and rips at the silicone and ideological flesh of control, still engages in psychic warfare against civilization.... It is rare in a world of posers, of fakes, of superficial trend surfers, of programed zombies, of reified rebels, of performative soldiers, of plastic identities, and such, to find someone who critically grapples with complexity and nuance and is not afraid to dip toes into the dangerous, a true free-spirit, an anarchist, or at least what that once meant before it all became so safe, so comfortable, so predictable, so non-anarchist. And when I am pleasantly surprised, usually by accident, that my paths come across one of these kindred spirits and their creative little explosions into the world, I am moved to respond. I begin to realize that I am not alone. There are others out there who are still alive, who have not been lobotomized and neutered by this displaced and dispirited post-modern techno-reality. I see you."

Well, *War of Dreams: A Field Guide to DIY Psy-Ops*, Jason's follow-up offering, not only confirms my suspicions, and dare I say hopes, but hits me smack in my wet thinking flesh with even deeper, more expansive, more clever, more biting analysis, and provocatively belly-shaking laughter than I had even imagined. Well done. Read these two books and call me in the morning (on my landline, it is all I got). I am sure there will be no shortage of things to discuss.

As in their previous book, *War of Dreams* combines Rodger's dense and provocative collages and flyers with detailed essays and other assorted wordplay on a significant spectrum of subjects and over a decent chunk of time. I am not sure of their process for linking writings with collages (topic, chronology, chaos theory, drunken blind darts, etc), but they fit perfectly together as an unfolding journey of critique. Similar to their first book, and throughout their collage and flyer project, Campaign to Play for Keeps (CtPFKs), Jason seems to have rejected the current trend to oversimplify, reproduce, and dumb things down in analysis and presentation. Jason crams so much content, both visual and in critique, that a highly complex density of meaning is created, what I view as an anti-meme (or a least what memes have come to mean today). The writing and subjects are at times moderately complicated, but Jason manages to express and explain in a way that reads clearly and smoothly, never a chore, and always interesting. The range is phenomenal. Not yer one trick ideological pony here. The only thing you can pin Jason down on is their unabashed heretical digging, prodding, and poking, as well as their insatiable appetite for reading (from actual dead-tree flesh and ink books), in every direction that can be conceived as interesting, an immoral (amoralists are almost as big of cop-outs as atheists) and precise mesh of ideas filtered through a creative, perceptive, and intense person. Although Jason does seem to have some personal favorites, like Walter Benjamin, Jerry Mander, The Situationists, Bob Black, Freddy Perlman, Hakim Bey, Feral Faun, William Burroughs, John Zerzan, Renzo Novatore, Genesis P-Orridge, and a whole lotta old school and hardcore punk, they never get old and they bring them into the analysis in fresh ways, clever angles, and from a place of comprehension, unlike the googled and wikied name-dropping turds who love to puke out phrases and unbaked concepts they haven't even begun to digest (I can still see the nuts and corn you morons).

The chorus: "Can we clone this mutant?"

No.

"Why Not!" they cry.

Because this is someone who is still very much alive and kicking and unique and breathing, someone who is present in this world with their eyes pried wide open. They engage in living critique, not dead games, not redundant gestures and ptsd ticks. And not online.

One of the many things I love about Jason's writing is that I continually expand my vocabulary with every page. Who knew a word like "teledildonics" existed and how perfectly it names cybersex? Jason uses this evocative language as they come out swinging at social alienation and the technologies and processes which deepen, expand, and accelerate its control in their opening piece "Alienation Cycles Of The Identity Image". This essay sets a solid tone for the book, only slightly distracting for me by a subtle attitude towards what feels framed as an almost obligatory, more active refusal over supposedly more passive escape. In this regard, Rodgers has previously called what they perhaps at times perceive as a more dormant, stagnant, self-referential, or even resigned response as "quietism" (which comes up more specifically further in the book). It is a term I think that can be too liberally applied, especially when its really hard to know what people do in their real world, away from print, cameras, and screens, in the middle of nowhere, between each other, underground, anonymously, without report-backs, away from scenes, behind fences and doors, in locked damp basements or dim dusty attics, in minds and hearts, off-the-grid, obscured by costumes and masks, up my nose, in the darkness, away from peeping eyes and measurements of the spectacle that is society. There are lots of ways to be willfully disobedient and to attack. Rejection and refusal can occur in many ways, including what may be termed as certain kinds of escape (either brief and temporary or more extended). I know Jason gets this. It is clear in so much of their writing, but what feels sometimes like a more overt call-to-duty may still go unrecognized by many with touches of lingering revolutionary residue and still a slight smear of social baggage along these lines. This is one of the few places Jason and I seem to meet across the creek a bit, but I actually enjoy the pushing and pulling, tussling and tugging. I find it inspiring, provoking, and challenging. I am all in.

Section One: Media is an analytically-leaning, yet not overly detached, attack on the post-modern cyber-world of global communication and control. Some of it feels like a freshening up and recontextualizing of the Situationists within the current cyber-hell ("Cyberia" as Jason cleverly describes the barren wasteland most have self-banished themselves to), but from a specifically anarchist and anti-civ perspective. In "The Object of Alienation and Reification" Rodgers examines the almost totalizing power of the technologically mass-ified illusion and its all-consuming affects on understanding and meaning. "As the world becomes more and more saturated with images it becomes more difficult to draw conclusions… Everything becomes fake news. The image is objectified into just more discrete components to be reassembled as entertainment." Again, Jason's proposal for a disconnection from the tentacles of fiber-optic mass media and their DIY prioritization seems to be the most relevant pushback to this mostly all-invasive and almost all-encompassing force.

Section Two: Anti-Media has a more nuts and bolts, active-oriented approach. This was one of my favorite sections and lets you really get to know what motivates Jason, their DIY attitudes, influences, their love of zines, punk rock aesthetics, deconditioning and decentering activities, and strategy of chaos and Dis Information, which Rodgers explains as "the scattering of the formation, allowing elements to reform in new, unpredictable, and dynamic ways." This section is not only filled with their usual (unusual) collaged flyers, drawings, and essays, but also very playful and pointed correspondence, letters to editors and zines, stories, reviews, and some really off-the-map and forgotten or only marginally known micro-histories. I specifically appreciated Jason's shinning the light on Susan Poe and Gerry Reith, two essential, yet virtually forgotten about, figures in the early incubation of a general perspective that became post-Left anarchy.

"My Date With Susan Poe" is Rodgers "fictionalizing an actual meet-up with a marginal" and offers glimpses into a time, place, person, and attitude that is typically only poorly and superficially understood and mimicked these days. Suzy "Crowbar" Poe seemed like a truly anarchic unique one. She was a co-conspirator with Rodgers on a zine, a cult formation, some general mayhem, and, according to Jason, was a "butt sniffer", oh, and she also put out *Popular Reality,* a staple of radical deviants and early post-Left anarchist appetites, with all the usual seemingly compulsory controversies (but more about all that in future Jason Rodgers releases).

Even more enlightening for me was "Gerry Reith's Terminal Clarity", a review of a compilation of Reith's writings put out by Nine Banded Books called *Neutron Gun Reloaded: a Gerry Reith Reader*. It recalled for me this barely mentioned yet crucial embryonic element who helped facilitate the particular version of anarchy that I would dive into in the late 90s, but someone I knew almost nothing about. After reading Jason's piece I quickly asked my ol' pal Staplecide if he had heard of *Neutron Gun,* of which he had multiple copies of different editions. Reith seems to be an invaluable lost piece in the puzzle for many of my generation of anarchists going forward. In his very short and volatile life (he ended it abruptly at the age of twenty-five with a bullet to his head at his typewriter in 1984), Gerry seemed to have provoked, offended, picked apart, and smashed politics, complicity, collectivism, and society with a cynical "post-right anarchist" individualist OG-edge-lordy transgression that is so desperately needed today as one of many important infusions (Sorry you thin-skinned over-sensitive lil' neo-emo liberal-lefties, its true, but that's another story). Unlike many of his contemporaries (and most anarchists today), Reith entered anarchy from a libertarian background, which probably contributed to his very interesting and unique offering. According to Rodgers, "He was a crucial part of the start of a movement towards a new politics, towards a new writing, towards a new form of adversarial media." Thanks Jason for reminding us, and for passing on the history to those few of us who can still read, and still want to.

Section Three: Politics starts to really cut into the meat of the multifaceted motivations, motions, and maneuvers of control, and some of Rodgers' proposals for an "insurrectionary guerilla-ontology attack on multiple fronts" to "cause damage that will resonate through the whole totality" as they conclude "Internalized Control (In Hopes of a Short Circuit)", a concise piece on contemporary forms of systematic power. While "Against Alienated Rationality" offers a sober critique of the "reductive conception of humanity" as well as enthusiastic calls for divergent and resonating infusions of irrationality. Jason accurately cites dada as one historical precedent for the "free sovereign" and "the anarch" to be inspired by in this way. There is so much in this section and the next (Anti-Politics) to keep diving back into again and again, way too much for summing up in review and well worth an in-depth one-on-one investigation. Whether it is work, academia, careers, activism, collectivism, progress, morality, or the misinterpreted, weaponized, or forbidden authors like HL Mencken or Ragnar Redbeard, when Rodgers is dissecting an idea, author, or tendency, they use well-oiled precession tools and maintain the wide-eyed fascination, unconstrained curiosity, and unabashed honesty of a young'n in the basement with a bloated roadkill bunny. That's how the political is best treated.

Section Four: Anti-Politics follows the biting CtPFKs flyer "Food Not Bombs: Diarrhea for the People!" which asks the politicized culinary questions: "Have you internalized enough guilt to think that you deserve to eat half rotten (but not fermented) produce, handled (but not washed) by junky traveler kids?" and "Do you consider expecting those preparing your food to wash their hands after a bowel movement to be an example of a privilege to be checked?" and responds with the anti-political just dessert: "People are too full of shit. Food Not Bombs can Help! One meal and your system is clear!" Turn the page and Divine's Invasion Squad takes aim and fires off: "FILTH IS MY POLITICS" as Jason then opens the section with a concise and clarifying distillation: "For every negative about my philosophy and program there is also a positive. You may notice that my positive still contains a negation. I suppose this is an example of a point in which I differ from a nihilist: a nihilist believes in nothing. I, however, believe in negation. Furthermore, this destruction can also be creative. From carrion compost left by negation, imaginal blossoms may bloom." This is a crucial distinguishing position, one I absolutely resonate with, and Rodgers fleshes it out well in the section that follows. It is a continuation of the previous section's attack on the political, handled with the same Rodgers' standard of concision and derision, but from the opposite direction.

The first major piece in this section, "Chaos Is Immanent: Struggle, Ontology, and The Condition Of Freedom" gets to the heart of Jason's project. It also fleshes out in more detail the subject of minor points of divergence I have had with them over what they term "quietism". I find their more extended and contextual explanations of this concept more agreeable, nuanced, and useful, yet, in moments, still a bit stuck in the concept of "struggle" for my taste. Although, I think most of the residual divergence to be only partially of substance, and mostly semantical and very close in actual perspective in reference to the goals, inspirations, and tensions concerning the self-willed individual in society. I think this quote from the piece sums up Jason's admirable motivations quite well: "Hope should be thrown out to begin with, and instead a joy of a life in struggle adopted. Why bother seeking easily attainable goals that are really just more banal miserabilism? Instead I'd like to seek a pataphysical objective, something so wonderful that it has never happened (or at least hasn't happened since Babylon erected ziggurats). I'd rather lose at the great work than a lifetime of success maintaining a sewer system." I cannot argue with this at all.

This section contains worlds within worlds of subjects and perspectives, becoming a swirling dervish of ideas connected in very interesting ways. "Feral Magik" is one of these gleaming gems, a spider-webbing pursuit covering vast terrains of the occult, deconditioning, altered states, telepathy, language, rewilding, resistance, and much more with a rigor and enthusiasm deserving of considerable note. In "Consensus Submission Making" Jason aptly critiques the herd mentality and hive mind that most people submit to on a daily basis due mostly, according to Jason, to their internalization of the external authority of society. Rodgers brings their analysis back to the more activist and collectivist of the so-called anarchist milieu who "sit through long-drawn-out-consensus-based meetings with rigid, formalized procedure, easily prone to abuse by politico-pervo authoritarian types drawn to these sort of structures. They join a community of peer pressure and shame, where comrades will pressure them into engaging in behavior they don't want to engage in, just like they were initially pressured by mass society. They confront the alienation of mass society by submerging themselves into a hive, reduced to a number on a membership roll." Instead, Rodgers proposes a revolt on every level against the Totality, especially, perhaps, on the micro, in our daily lives, a suggestion I could not agree with more. "Field Studies in Misanthropology", a subject dear to my little black heart, is a brief and quite personal piece that stems from a very revealing journal entry which includes: “I often find it nearly impossible to relate to people I encounter in my daily life. I can’t relate to anything about them. I find nothing of interest in their interests. When I try to share how I feel, to communicate something about my being, I feel like I might be speaking a foreign language.

I speak, but most often I am met by blank stares or mild disgust.” Jason’s response to these very understandable yet potentially crippling misanthropic tendencies in their own and in others’ hearts and minds is a very thoughtful temporary acceptance without an overwhelming submission into despair, and yes, quietness.

This section continues to flow into a very impressive arch through a seemingly unending set of deeply engaging and furthering pieces like “Affinity and Passional Conspiracy”, “The Journey Beyond Anarchism”, “Individuality, Identity, and The Creative Nothing”, “Notes On the Death of the Social”,

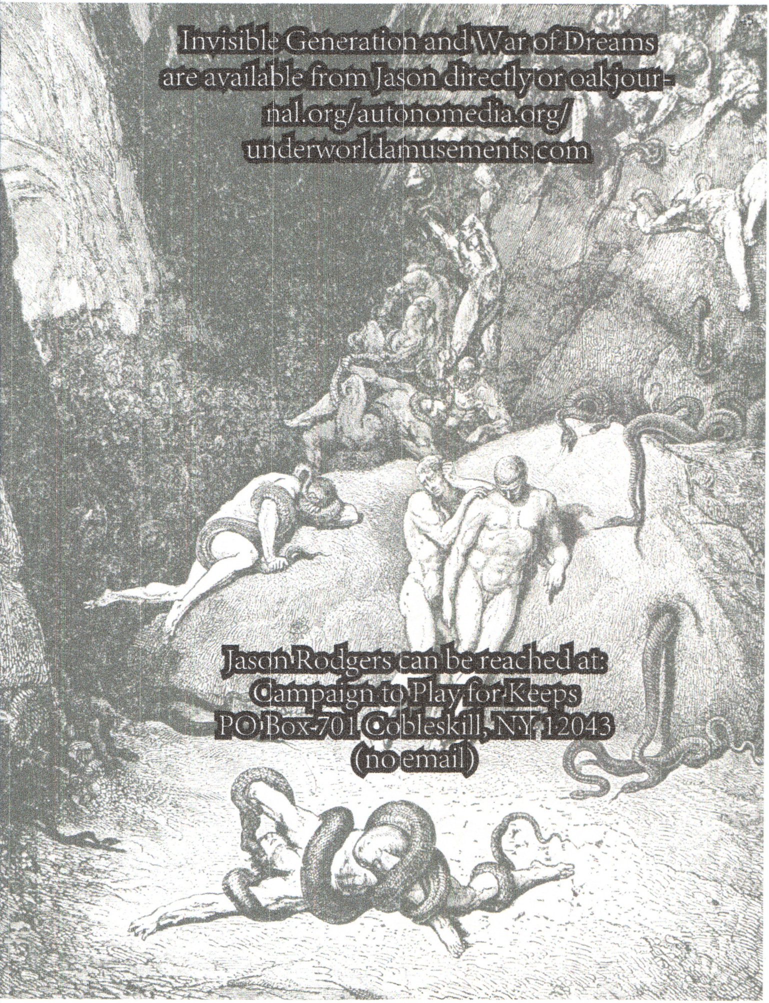
“Trajectories Against Civilization”, “Uncivilized and Queer: An Anti essentialist Critique of Gender”, “Sodomy and Sigils In the Circle Pit” and much more to sink your ravenous feral fangs into. The section concludes with one of my favorite pieces in the book, “Escapism”. It fleshes out the sometimes touchy subject historically, philosophically, and practically, and comes up with a fairly adjacent assessment to my own, that without an intentional situation to sustain, protect, and nourish us, and without people of deep affinity (yet containing unique and individual difference), our resistance to civilization will not only be limp and fruitless, it will be unsatisfying on so many levels. This terrain is complicated and vast, for sure, fraught with many potential trappings, pitfalls, and leechings, but one worth the dangerous, endless, and satiating lived experimentation. We are not soldiers, we are living beings who need to be filled with a continual vitality to resist civilization and our precious energy needs to be replenished directly and daily in our lives. Surrogate activities and might-sucking distractions magnate all around us as we attempt to be at home in our world.

And finally, Section 5: Schiz/Misc wraps it all up with an assortment of oddities, misfits, and loose ends. Personally, for me this concluding section was slightly less interesting, but I appreciate Jason’s enthusiasm for their endlessly veining-out unconventional interests and it does help dissipate the heaviness of the previous sections into a more dream-like and playful goo, sending us all on our limitless little ways. In this almost afterward-like section we rub elbows with visionary artist P and their psychotronic art, chomp down some amanitas with a shamanistic and hermetic Santa, and get a few other entertaining conspiratorial tutorials. Most relevant to me was the opening statement to the final section, pulled out in part for the back cover: "I am interested in ideas that don't fit… The limitations of an alien reality must be smashed. It isn't important to reach the masses, instead we want a growing lunatic fringe, schizoid anarchs who are uncontrollable and irresistible." Delightful.

If it were not for the likes of Jason Rodgers and a ragged assortment of other such kindred deviants scattered about I would have left anarchists behind long ago. These rare crackles, sparks, and glimmers lighten my darkening heart, blow out my dusty mind, and rattle my creaking bones. They put a crooked skip in my step and rowdy stomp in my boot. They don't delude, distract, or soothe with such false balms as hope or lofty philosophical ideals, but instead invigorate with a potent rejection and intoxicating honesty so sorely needed. It hurt so good.

Jason is no mere propagandist, that is a project for politics and power. Rodgers is a provocateur of the highest degree and a psychic warrior of great finesse. In their attempt to corrupt the perceptions and attitudes of individuals, groups, and powers, Jason's psychological operations have no limits, but don't expect the played out and obtuse knuckle-headed full-frontal attack! attack! attack! No, Rodgers is like a brilliant little termite, chewing away the rotting structures and shitting out the detritus for dreams to grow in as the mutherfucker crumbles from within. Chew!

"I know life is a game and I intend to play for keeps.
Time to get serious about joking and work at play.
It is time to play hard and play the ultimate game, war games."
- Campaign to Play for Keeps



Invisible Generation and War of Dreams are available from Jason directly or oakjournal.org/autonomedia.org/underworldamusements.com

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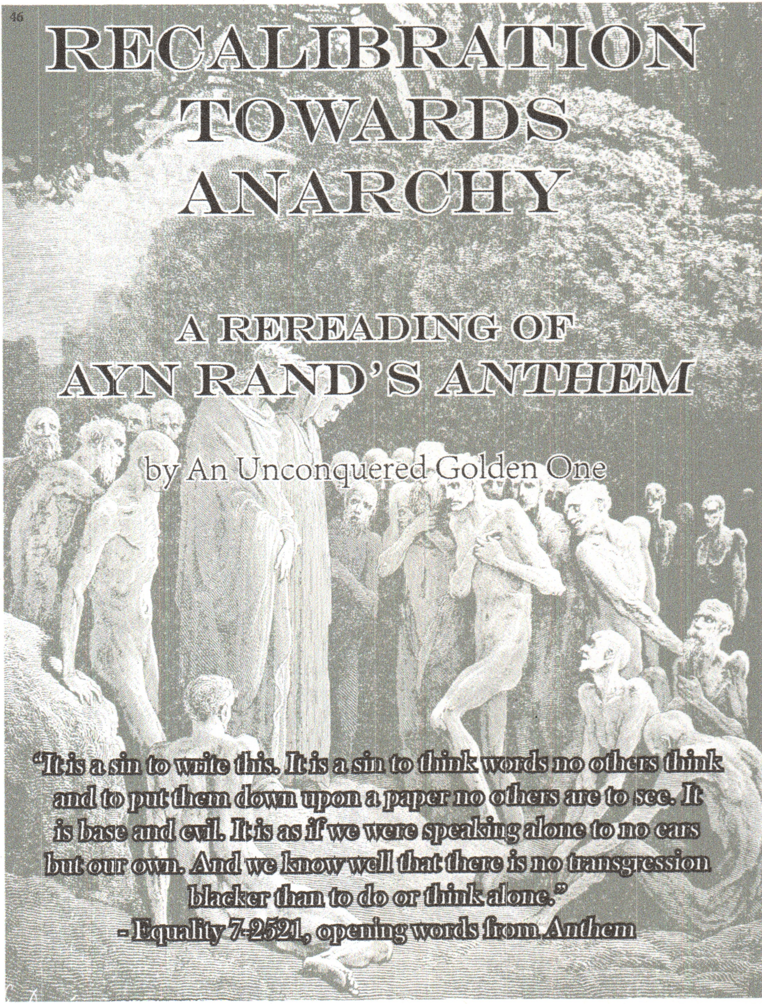

RECALIBRATION TOWARDS ANARCHY

A REREADING OF AYN RAND'S ANTHEM

by An Unconquered Golden One

"It is a sin to write this. It is a sin to think words no others think and to put them down upon a paper no others are to see. It is base and evil. It is as if we were speaking alone to no ears but our own. And we know well that there is no transgression blacker than to do or think alone."

- Equality 7-2521, opening words from *Anthem*

Ideas are best used as tools, not as foundations or directions, and certainly not truth. We can utilize them for specific tasks and reasons and points of reference in the ongoing creative expression of our lives. They can be particular lenses to temporarily gaze through in order to understand a certain complex dynamic or context. They can touch a place around some corner one thought unreachable. I guess, to some degree, an idea is like a dildo, you can acquire great pleasure, release, and self-understanding from it and then put it away in a nightstand, or you can use it to just fuck yourself. I play with ideas, they do not play me.

I tussle with more nihilistic ideas and thinkers when I begin to feel too hopeful about an aspect of society or any sort of positive social project (so just about never). I reread Bonanno and ponder insurrectionary concepts when I begin to feel too static in my carved out and defended enclave or when a very rare and real opening or rupture seems possible. I revisit primitivist texts when I want a certain type of inspiration from the more direct and immediate human experience. I pick up surrealist material when I wish to open or twist my understanding of reality from an unpredictable perspective. I read romantically-tinted poetry and listen to emotionally-dripping music when my heart is too parched and in need of a certain gushy nourishment. I explore dark cynical comedy when I get to my breaking point with the morons of this world and need to pull out a more absurdist perspective and invoke unexpected laughter. And, I read individualist and egoist texts when I forget to place myself at the center of my world, with all meaningful relationships moving outward from there. There are so many interesting takes and ideas and directions to tinker with, push and pull on, and dive into which might enrich our lives, without becoming an ideological soldier on one hand, or a post-modern dupe and clown that tethers itself to the perpetual bankruptcy of nothingness on the other.

Ideas, and those who speak, write, or live them, can be helpful when they are used as temporary contextualized recalibration for understanding and more precisely locating and expressing our unique selves in this world. If we consider the generalized anarchist space, with its undeniable and almost complete immersion into leftism and its inherent collectivist morality (among so many other limitations and problems), more individualist infusions from a diverse array of directions are absolutely necessary if it is not to become deathly anemic in the actual qualities of anarchy.

One type of pool that I personally enjoy wading in are the alleged and ever-growing and continually redefined "forbidden zones", where I may wrestle my way through the challenges they might offer and also build on the support they might provide. There are countless of these "dangerous" places that could help individuals and the anarchist space in a genuine, refreshing, and robust recalibration towards anarchy. It would be sad and troubling if anarchists felt that they had absolutely nothing to learn about themselves, the world, and other people's perspective on it, from the likes of those who have been or are becoming "forbidden". I have a hard time imagining myself without some of the provocative takes and various flavors of transgressions by likes of such pariahs as Bob Black, Peter Lamborn Wilson, William Burroughs, Charles Bukowski, Jim Goad, Ernst Jünger, Benjamin De Casseres, Dora Marsden, (the dreaded) Ragnar Redbeard… and those are the one's I can list in public without too much fear of some sort of authoritarian retribution, I hope. I would also include somewhere around there an arch-enemy of collectivism, Ayn Rand.

"But I still wonder how it was possible, in those graceless years of transition, long ago, that men did not see whither they were going, and went on, in blindness and cowardice, to their fate."
- Equality 7-2521, from *Anthem*

So, let's get to my reason for taking temporary pause from my directly-experienced life to put pen to paper here. My teenage daughter was recently assigned Ayn Rand's *Anthem* to read in her sophomore high school literature class. I did not have the reactionary and closed-minded response that most leftists, and more unfortunate, most anarchists, would have to this. For one, I trust my daughter's more than competent comprehension skills, critical take, and generally anarchic outlook, being extremely bright, courageous, independent, and well, homeschooled for most of her education. Two, I am not threatened by mere words, and I much enjoy those which provoke. And three, I greatly appreciate some of Rand's perspective in certain realms.

Even though it has been a couple of decades since my last reading of Ayn Rand, I remembered her as thoughtful, strong, challenging, and in very specific respects, completely disagreeable, all reasons to engage with the most concise piece in her catalog. I remembered reading Rand at my daughter's age, along with a whole hell of a lot of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron" in which "THE YEAR WAS 2081, and everybody was finally equal." is a great companion to *Anthem*, especially for a teenager's, hopefully, ever-expanding mind).

So, after an interesting conversation about the book with my daughter — her reading, her teacher's perspective, and other student's thoughts — and with my deviantly transgressive little heart that knew most of my more collectivist-oriented friends would cringe with ignorantly self-righteous disgust, I started to flip through the book, finally settling into a comfortable chair with a cup of herbal tea from our backwood garden's bounty and plowed through the short but poignant novella in just a couple of hours on a rainy early winter morning.

Anthem was written by Ayn Rand (born Alisa Zinovyevna Rosenbaum 1905-1982) in 1937 during a break from her substantial work The Fountainhead (1943), her breakthrough novel about a forceful and seemingly unflappable architect's push against both the credit-grabbing and the bootlicking surrogate actors. While an interesting read, it is not something I would necessarily recommend or bother reviewing. Rand originally conceived preliminary versions of *Anthem* as a play as far back as her teen years during the desperate, hungry, collectivizing, consolidating, and purge-heavy era of early Soviet Russia. She eventually fled to the United States where she would begin writing screenplays, dramas for broadway, and other fictional narratives. When she got to seriously working on *Anthem* in her early thirties, she envisioned it as a serialized story in a magazine, but when she was unable to sell it that way it got published in its recognizable novella form. Its original working title, Ego, was changed because it was too blunt and did not allow for an unfolding of the story by presenting her philosophy slowly throughout and ultimately to be discovered fully by the book's end. It was renamed *Anthem*, or "ode" to the ego, possibly one of the few anthems I could ever find myself humming beneath my breath.

Anthem was an early fictional and more poetic sketch of Rand's later and more developed (and in my opinion less interesting but still valuable as a tool) philosophical system of ethical egoism and rationalism, as opposed to altruism and faith, that she called Objectivism. Rand's Objectivism was a self-described "new moral philosophy of rational self-interest" and is poignantly given explanation in a lengthy monologue delivered by the strike leader John Galt in her 1957 novel, Atlas Shrugged, considered by many to be her masterpiece and grand fictional finale. Objectivism centers one's goal as their own happiness, creative productivity as their activity, and reason as truth. The first, obviously a vital anarchist goal, the second could be argued to a limited and specific degree, the third is unfortunate in at least the way I conceive of both reason and truth, not to mention all the morality this all tends to be steeped in.

Rand thought of artistic expression as a re-creation of the world in relation to the metaphysical values of the artist. She felt that this form of presentation allowed for a more graspable conception of ideas than academic or philosophical means. Rand expressed individualist romantic realism and was rabidly anti-collectivist and anti-religious, and this was the theme through all of her novels and essays. I find her later non-fictional works too rigid and uninteresting and her larger novels more convoluted, and I never really had enough resources to be to invested in the whole capitalism thing either, but there is a dry sweetness and stark poetic nature to *Anthem* that makes Rand's ideas more readable and relatable. It is also a very short book, adding to its intimacy, not the enormous tomes of her later fiction.

The story in *Anthem*, which could be viewed as a short series of emotive explorations following an arc from collectivist slavery towards individual freedom, is written from the perspective of a young man named Equality 7-2521 and takes place in some unspecified dystopian future after the world had reentered a vague dark age. Equality 7-2521 details the stark events of his life up to that point, forbiddingly writing by candlelight in a secretly discovered underground tunnel, a remnant from the Unmentionable Times, from before, we are to assume, the previous technological civilization collapsed and the current authoritarian collectivism arose from its ashes.

Equality 7-2521 is torn between his violations against authority, now mostly self-imposed by each member of society, and the knowledge and solitude he has deviantly found underground. Each night his uniqueness and desires come more and more to the foreground as he sheds his ingrained obedience. He nourishes his perpetually itching curiosity, above-average intelligence, and inclination for preferences, all he had once thought and was told were curses, defects, crimes, and sins. No matter how hard he tried, he could never conform to the standards of mediocrity and sameness, as much as he thought he wished he could. He grew up in this tension and was distorted by it as he nervously chased a nagging glimmer still faintly flickering in his heart and mind. Even when the Council of Vocations assigned him to be a street sweeper, instead of a scientist or scholar as he wished, he half-heartedly convinced himself that this pleased him, for it meant he could atone for his crimes and sins, yet he was never quite satisfied and never really believed this to be true.

"It is my mind which thinks, and the judgment of my mind is the only searchlight that can find the truth."
- Equality 7-2521, from *Anthem*

During his tenth year, Equality 7-2521 witnessed the sanctioned public burning of the Transgressor of the Unspeakable Word, he who had uncovered and spoken the forbidden word "I". During his execution, the unflinching Transgressor exchanged a deep gaze with Equality 7-2521, setting into motion his eventually actualized, yet tormented, experimentation and discovery. During this period he finds the underground tunnel, books, and materials to tinker with at night while the sheep sleep. He eventually harnesses electricity and constructs a lightbulb. He feels he must share this with the World Council, and thus thrust society into a new era of enlightenment. His hopes are extinguished, however, when he is tossed into the Palace of Corrective Detention and tortured after mistakenly returning back tardy to his barracks one night. He escapes and brings his invention to the Council who threaten to execute him for insubordination and demand his lightbulb for destruction. Equality 7-2521 flees the city into the Uncharted Forest where he discovers his first sustained tastes of freedom.

In the forest, despite his newly-found liberty, he is saddened by the fact he has lost his one chance for true love and chosen companionship. During Equality 7-2521's time working as a street sweeper on a rural highway he had met Liberty 5-3000, a peasant girl who also followed a similar quest for knowledge, discovery, and freedom. They spoke, although it was forbidden, and immediately fell in love, renaming each other: Equality 7-2521 becomes The Unconquered and Liberty 5-3000, The Golden One. After a day or so alone in the woods after his escape, to The Unconquered's delight, The Golden One appears. She had fled The Palace of Mating, where she was expected to breed with whomever The Council had chosen to be the socially-engineered correct match. She had followed her true lover into the Uncharted Forest.

They vow to live in freedom and seclusion in this newfound paradise. They find joy and pleasures never dreamed of. They eventually find an abandoned mansion in the mountains and claim this home which is filled with fine things and an enormous library. The Unconquered devours the written word, eventually discovering in print the forbidden "I". As the book abruptly ends, the lovers once again take new names, The Golden One is now Gaea and The Unconquered is Prometheus. They pledge to preserve this place, welcome in like-minded folk, and birth a new breed of humans who cherish individualism and the ever-lasting supremacy of the ego.

"And my happiness needs no higher aim to vindicate it. My happiness is not the means to any end. It is the end. It is its own goal. It is its own purpose."
- Equality 7-2521, from *Anthem*

Again, for the record, as if that matters to the closed-minded ideological tools and the ignorant fools who will dishonestly and erroneously paint me as being in-bed with AnCaps, fascist-adjacent, blah, blah, blah, I have many fundamental disagreements with Rand in general, and with certain aspects of *Anthem*, but still highly recommend its reading. My primary diversions from Rand's perspective, especially how they are displayed in *Anthem*, are fairly significant: her views of industrialism and technology as means to free the individual from the collective. This was a common theme and perspective of her time, progressively growing more intense the century or so leading up to it. Even one of my favorite literary libertines, Oscar Wilde, optimistically thought technology would free up our lives from the mundane chores so that we might prioritize more creative and pleasurable endeavors. Rand saw technology as a prime form of individual creation that would inherently help humanity flourish through invention and innovation. Both of these authors might realize the folly in their views if they knew its later forms and consequences. I believe the inherent slavery and alienation in technology would become obvious to Wilde for sure, and also possibly to Rand as well.

All that said, while Rand and I disagree greatly in regard to technology and industrialism, as well as rationality and atheism, and, of course, in some pretty substantial economic matters not really addressed directly in this earlier work, our view of the individual and collectivism could not be more parallel, at least in how it is displayed in *Anthem*. The streamline and precise anarchic transition from the oppressive "We" to the empowered "I" that Rand plots in *Anthem* offers much for the contemporary anarchist to honestly consider, even if it does fall apart somewhat for me in the last few pages. I do believe, as she describes her own philosophical connections and applications in more detail in later works, especially Atlas Shrugged, our perspectives move further and further apart, but still relevant enough to offer points of reflection, distinction, challenge, warning, and debate. Conflating who Ayn Rand became or other's readings of her work (or non-reading hear-say condemnations) does not do *Anthem* justice as a clear and precise cautionary tale against collectivism, unless, of course, someone has an acknowledged or unrecognized ideological position to rabidly defend.

As mentioned, at the end of the story, our protagonist sheds the name assigned to him by the collectivist authority, as well as the one his lover had anointed him upon their shared awakening, and takes the name Prometheus, a theme used throughout Rand's writings. This could be read in many different ways. There are two main ones that come to mind for me. First, and probably more likely given Rand's proclivity for technological advancements as a form of free-expression of the self, is the frighteningly optimistic opening for an ever-more technological reality, as Prometheus, sometimes referred to as the God of Fire, did by defying the Olympian gods and stealing flame from them and giving it to humanity in the form of technology, knowledge, and civilization. Boo. Hiss.

My other reading, and slightly more to my liking, is that using the name Prometheus is not merely a metaphor for creative and innovative people rebelling against the imposed restrictions of modern collectivist society, but also the condemnation to eternal torment for this transgression. In the lore, Prometheus was bound to a rock and an eagle was sent to eat his liver, thought to be the seat of human emotions. Growing back every night, his liver would be devoured again the next day in an unending cycle. Rand, while obviously more than enthusiastic about individuals experimenting with technological creation and what could be potential outcomes of such tinkering, might also be warning, or just stating as some perceived objective fact to the ongoing endless perseverance needed in this perpetual endeavor, with one can of worms opening even larger ones forever. While Rand might welcome this challenge with a gusto that I cannot appreciate as an anarchic-luddite-oriented individual, at least Ayn Rand appears honest, both with her thoughts and feelings, and their possible consequences. This is more than I can say for so many contemporary anarchists, who seem to either conceal or do not even begin to understand themselves and their relationship to anarchy and the consequences of their thoughts and actions. I require a more honest, open, and living interaction with ideas and their consequences than is typically offered in general, and sadly, in the anarchist space.

A rigorous recalibration towards anarchy is vital if anarchists are to retain any of the libertine values necessary for its authenticity and life. I think one place to begin is to venture into to the "forbidden zones" that are guarded from one side and damned from the other. Uncover them from the agendas that bury and distort them, explore them, struggle with them, not for or against them, and use them for the understanding and expression of one's unique self and its relationship to others and the world. Anarchy demands this. Are you ready to stop playing it safe? I am.

Oh, and to my daughter's high school literature teacher's credit, they followed up the reading of *Anthem* with Ursula K. Le Guin's philosophical short story "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas", but I won't spoil that particular treasure for you here…

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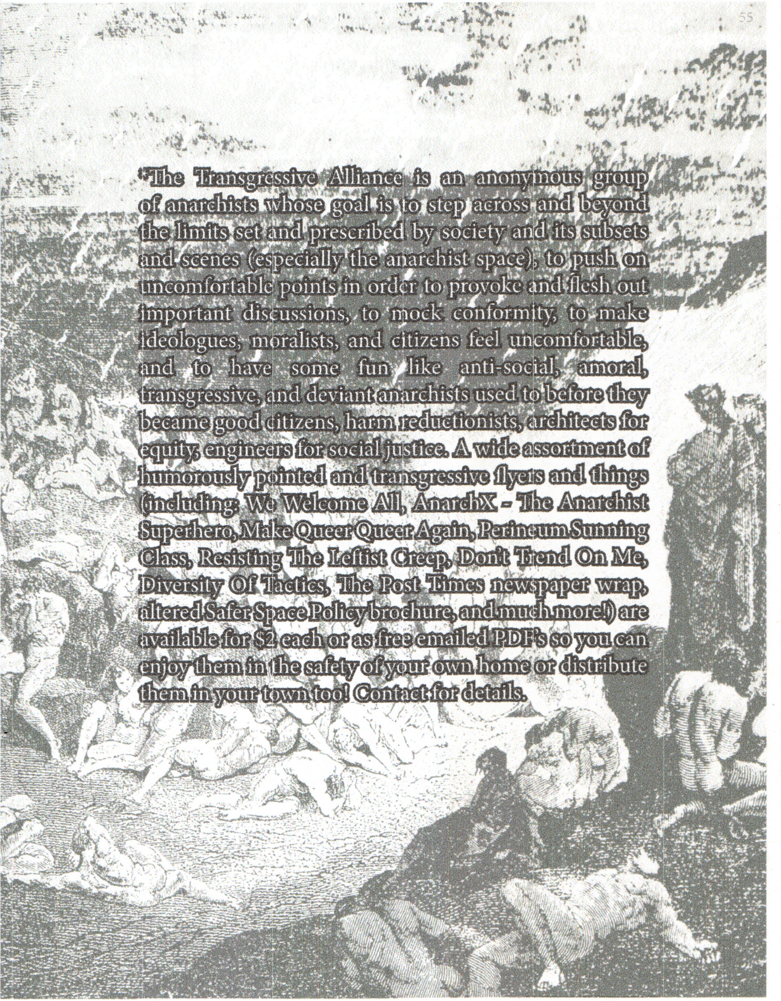
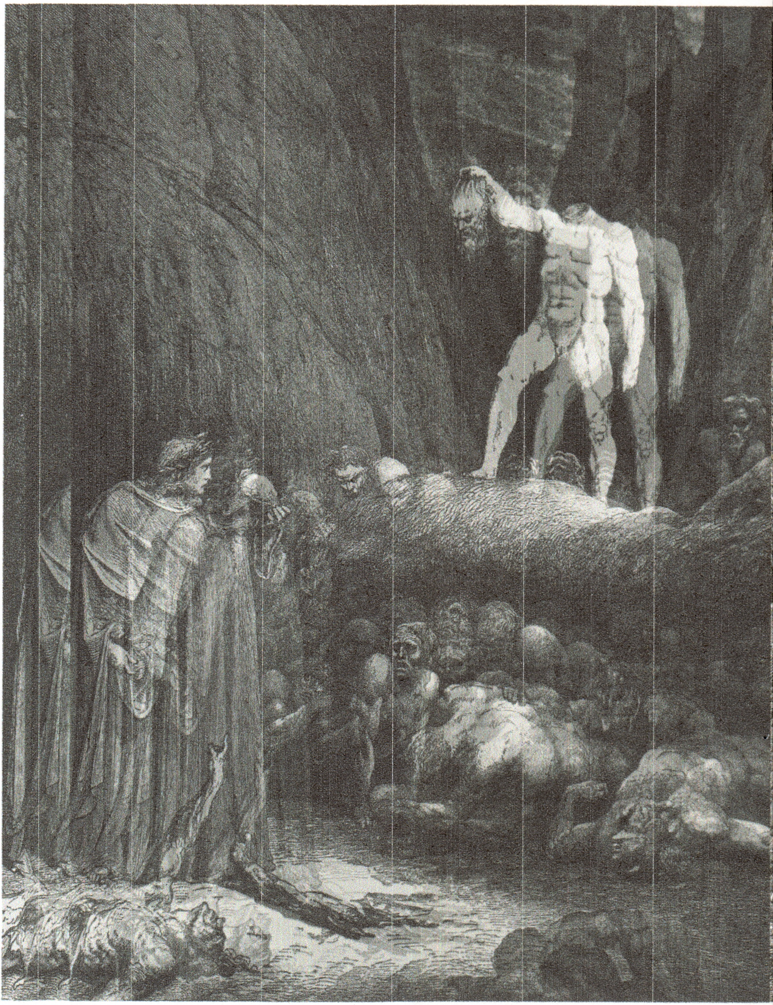


*The Transgressive Alliance is an anonymous group of anarchists whose goal is to step across and beyond the limits set and prescribed by society and its subsets and scenes (especially the anarchist space), to push on uncomfortable points in order to provoke and flesh out important discussions, to mock conformity, to make ideologues, moralists, and citizens feel uncomfortable, and to have some fun like anti-social, amoral, transgressive, and deviant anarchists used to before they became good citizens, harm reductionists, architects for equity, engineers for social justice. A wide assortment of humorously pointed and transgressive flyers and things (including: We Welcome All, AnarchX - The Anarchist Superhero, Make Queer Queer Again, Perineum Sunning Class, Resisting The Leftist Creep, Don't Trend On Me, Diversity Of Tactics, The Post Times newspaper wrap, altered Safer Space Policy brochure, and much more!) are available for $2 each or as free emailed PDF's so you can enjoy them in the safety of your own home or distribute them in your town too! Contact for details.



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